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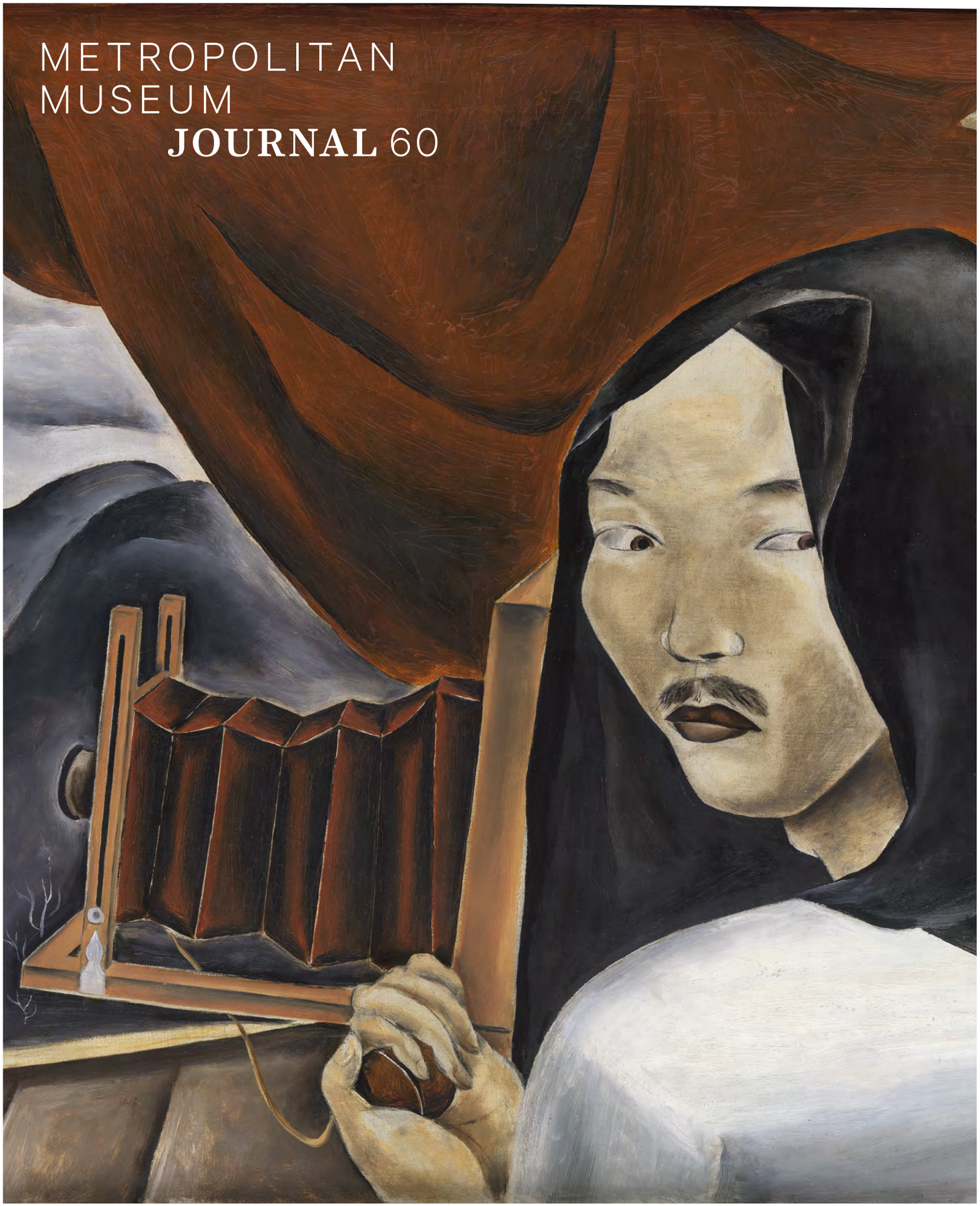

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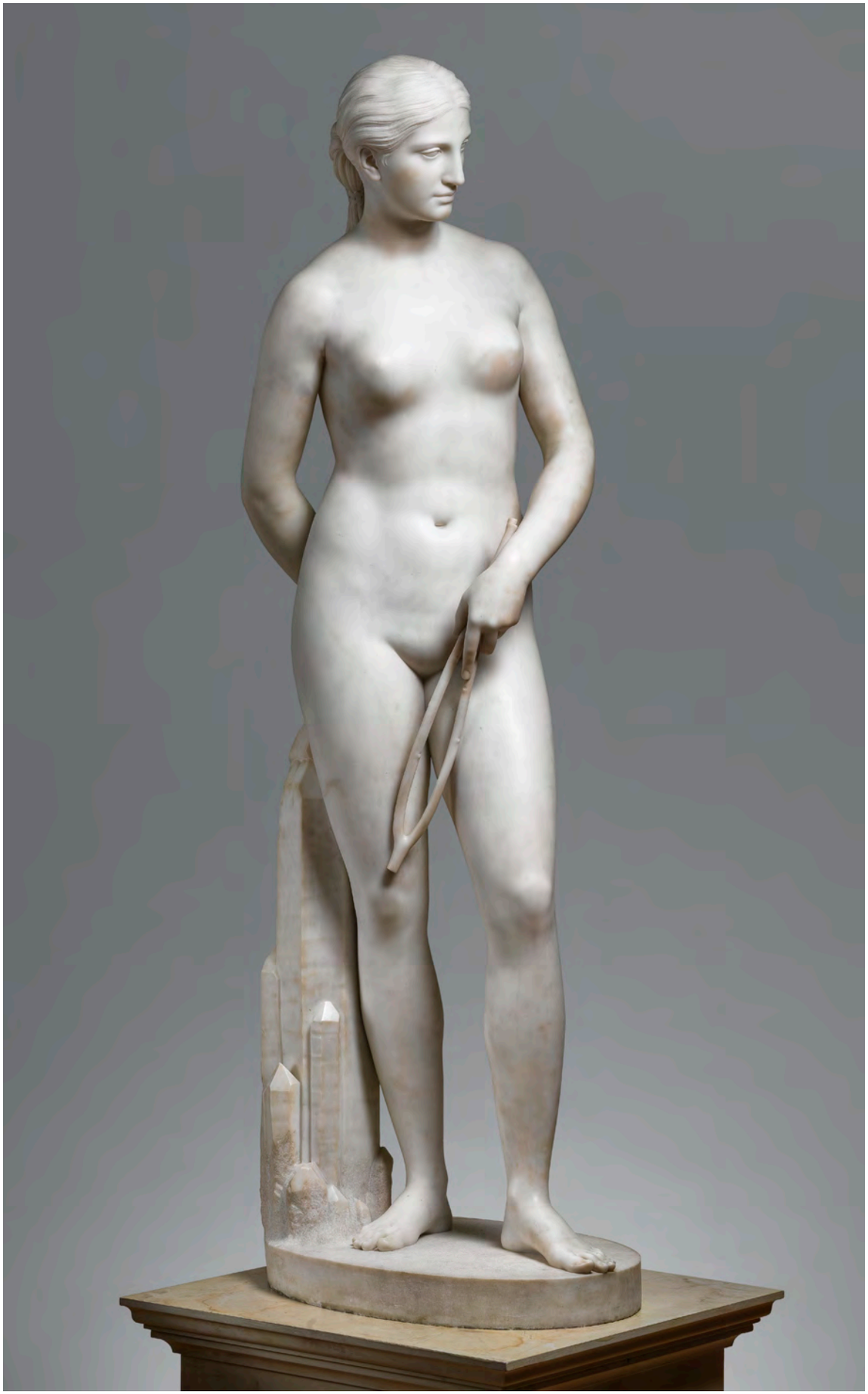

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM JOURNAL 60

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Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* (detail), 1924. See fig. 1, p. 87.
Back cover Illustration: Eliza Greatorex, *The Crypt, Mont St. Michel*, 1887 (detail). See fig. 6, p. 81.

Illustration on p. 2: Hiram Powers, *California*, modeled 1850–55; carved 1858. See fig. 1, p. 56.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
MMAB The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin
MMJ Metropolitan Museum Journal

Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.

METROPOLITAN
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Melosa's Prize Revisited: Weaving the Story of a Greek Eye Cup

SHERAMY D. BUNDRICK

Μελόσας · ἐμὶ · νι · κατέριον · χαίνοσα · τὰς κόρας · ἐνίκε

I am the victory prize of Melosa. She won the girls' [wool-]combing contest.

These inscribed words appear under the foot of an Athenian black-figure eye cup in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, acquired in 1944 from Jacob Hirsch (figs. 1, 2).[1] The cup is said to have been found "in the suburbs of Taranto," suggesting the necropoleis of Taras, a Greek colony in the modern Italian region of Puglia.[2] Supporting this provenience, the inscription is consistent with sixth-century Tarentine dialect, the local letterforms related to those of Taras's mother city, Sparta.[3] The cup itself—a Type A kylix with quadripartite decorative scheme of large eyes and scenes from the Trojan War—can be stylistically situated to around 540–530 BCE.[4] Shortly before its acquisition by The Met, Hansjörg Bloesch had linked its potting with that of six other vessels, dubbing the whole the "Melusa Group."[5]

Metropolitan Museum Journal, volume 60, 2025. Published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with the University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.1086/739631. © 2025 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

fig. 1 Athenian black-figure eye cup, ca. 540–530 BCE. Terracotta, H. 4 15/16 in. (12.6 cm), diam. 11 3/4 in. (29.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1944 (44.11.1)

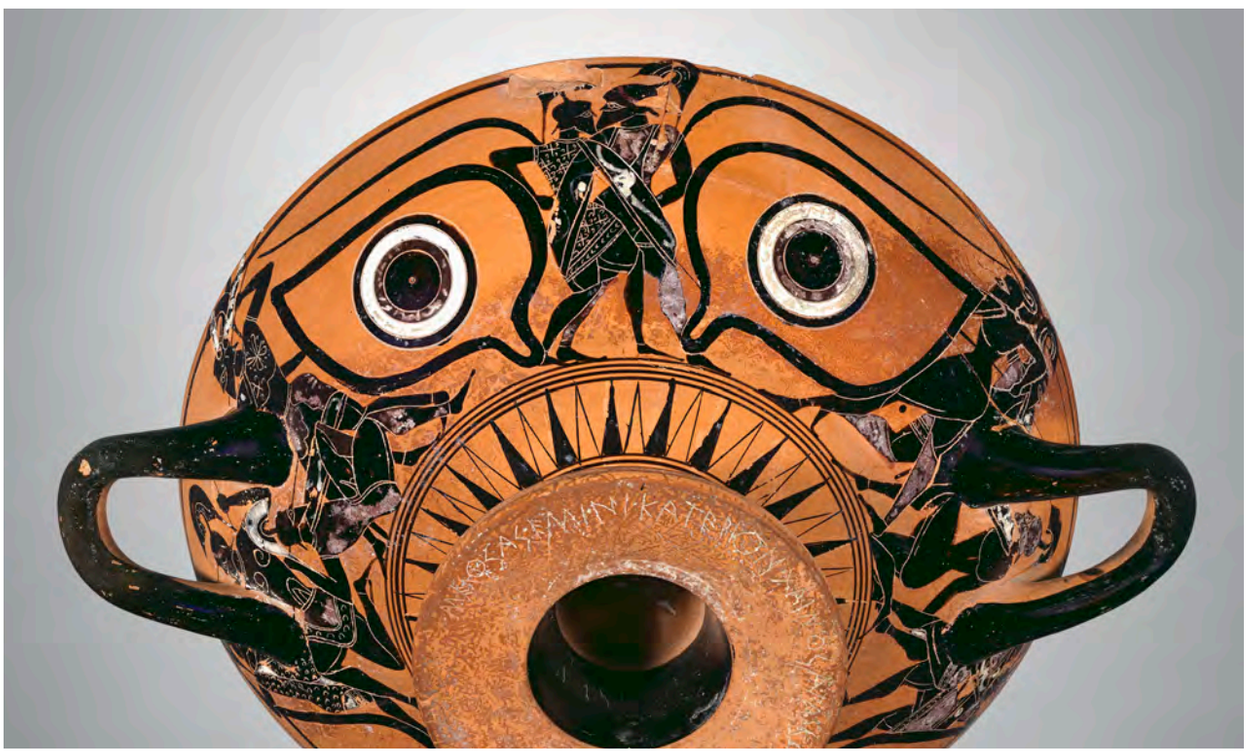

fig. 2 Athenian black-figure eye cup (fig. 1) showing scenes of warriors

The graffito of Melosa is extraordinary for its proclamatory language, mention of an otherwise unknown event, and fleeting glimpse into the life of a girl or woman who has remained silent to history.[6] The kylix is typically discussed in those terms, with the inscription earning the most attention. Melosa's identity and social status have been of particular interest, namely the question of whether she was a *hetaira* (the word is often translated as "courtesan") or a so-called respectable girl. If she were a sex worker, the cup and inscription would have been grounded in the strongly male environment of the Greek *symposion* (drinking party), with the text written more in jest than with serious intent. If she hailed from a different background, on the other hand, the cup sheds light on a world of female companionship and competition otherwise elusive in ancient sources.

In the first section of this article, I reconsider evidence related to the inscription, including the etymology of Melosa's name and attestation of the activity of

fig. 3 Detail of Athenian black-figure eye cup (fig. 1) showing inscription under the foot

wool-combing. Iconographic representation of pre-spinning processes on vases has been insufficiently mined, yet lends credence to the notion of Melosa's alleged respectability. In the second section, I turn to the cup as bearer of the inscription and meaningful object in its own right. To separate the inscription from the vessel, as most scholars have done, is to adopt a misleadingly modern perspective. Instead, the materiality of the cup in all of its aspects must be viewed as integral to its Tarentine context and selection there as a *nikaterion* (victory prize). This approach builds on the so-called material turn in scholarship, including calls to reintegrate Greek inscriptions with the objects on which they appear.[7] Form, decoration, and the first-person speaking inscription, I suggest, worked together as a *mnema* (remembrance) to Melosa's *kleos* (renown), in an almost Homeric way. Indeed, the mythical figure of Helen of Sparta looms large in this reading (fig. 1). Although ostensibly portrayed by the Athenian painter of the cup as submissive to her husband, Menelaos, at the fall of Troy, in Spartan society—many of whose traditions were adopted at Taras—Helen was celebrated as an expert woolworker, a patron of girls and women, and a quasi-divine subject of cult. These interwoven associations plausibly encouraged the appropriation and transformation of the imported eye cup into Melosa's prize.

KORE, WOOLWORKER, WINNER

Since its acquisition, discourse about The Met's cup has foregrounded its inscription and, by extension, Melosa's identity and social status (fig. 3). Woolworking was practiced by girls and women across all spectra of Greek society and in myth was associated with divinities and heroines like Helen of Sparta (fig. 1). Modern discussion of woolworkers in texts and iconography, however, has often been reduced to an overly binary question: sex workers or so-called respectable women?[8] In her initial publication of the cup, Marjorie Milne acknowledged that Melosa might have been a *hetaira* but concluded: "It is hard to believe . . . that our Melusa was anything but a nice girl. . . . to enter a woolworking contest, win a prize, and then preserve that prize so carefully that it could be buried with one . . .

surely bespeaks ardor and pride in domestic pursuits."[9] While making valuable points about the etymology of Melosa's name in the course of the article, Milne's proprietary language ("our Melusa," "our little prize-winner") encodes a desire for Melosa *not* to be a sex worker, in keeping with mid-twentieth-century social mores. By contrast, scholars like Massimo Nafissi and Marina Fischer have favored Melosa being a *hetaira*, much as they and others have argued for many wool-workers on Athenian vases being *hetairai*.[10] In a recent article, Ian Plant reexamined epigraphic and textual evidence and proposed that Melosa was not only respectable but literate.[11] For Plant, presumptive conclusions that Melosa was a *hetaira* "define [her] purely by her relationship to men and thus sit within the boundaries of history as seen from a male perspective, where women's history does not exist except in the context of male society."[12]

Two aspects of Melosa's inscription have figured into the discussion: first, her name. It is a rare name, with five other occurrences as pre-firing inscriptional labels on fifth-century Athenian red-figure vases.[13] Four appear on vessels from the Polygnotan workshop: a pelike where the name labels a woman in a scene with Apollo and Tityos, who should ordinarily be Leto; a stamnos where it labels an Amazon; a calyx krater where it likewise labels an Amazon; and an amphora where "Melelosa" names a figure who should otherwise be a Muse.[14] Friedrich Hauser proposed that in each instance the name referred to an actual acquaintance; Milne suggested that the Athenian Melousa (to use a local spelling) was likely a *hetaira*, and Plant agreed.[15] Recent research on women's names in Athens suggests a more complex situation, with the social persona of many such figures on vases remaining ambiguous.[16] In any case, a fifth-century Athenian woman has nothing to do with the Melosa of sixth-century Taras, and as Milne and Plant caution, naming conventions in one city cannot be uncritically applied to others. At Sparta, surviving *partheneia* (maidens' songs) by the poet Alkman preserve the names of several free-born young women.[17] Plant offers a promising etymological comparison for the Tarentine Melosa with a Spartan Astymeloisa named in Alkman's fragmentary second *Partheneion*.[18]

fig. 4 Athenian red-figure cup, attributed to Douris, ca. 480–470 BCE. Terracotta, H. 5⅛ in. (13 cm), diam. 13 in. (33 cm). Staatliche Museen-Antikensammlung, Berlin (F2289)

Melosa's award-winning activity has likewise earned scrutiny. The verb *xainein* is often translated as "carding" and elsewhere, perhaps more accurately, as "combing."[19] The pre-spinning process signified by the term involved removing dirt and debris from the fleece, separating the fibers, and preparing a roving of loose wool to be later spun into tighter thread, sometimes using an epinetron covering the thigh. On Attic vases, this process is uncommonly depicted in comparison to spinning and has risked mischaracterization, given that the woman making roves often works the wool against her bare leg.[20] The most cited example appears inside a red-figure kylix, which, although found at Etruscan Vulci and possibly made for export, represents a shape related to the *symposion* and aimed by its painter Douris to the male gaze (fig. 4).[21] Where the cup's exterior portrays a *komos* of drunken men carousing in the streets, a pair of women occupy an undefined building in the cup's interior, one of them making roves. Despite the scene's ambiguity, many scholars have been quick to label the woolworker as a sex worker in a brothel; on this basis, Nafissi suggested the *hetaira* Melosa engaged in a leg-baring beauty contest at a Tarentine *symposion*.[22] In my opinion, whether Douris intended the working woman as housewife or *hetaira* is less the point. She became whoever the viewer desired, the peek-a-boo image inside the cup a spicy revelation.

Other images of pre-spinning processes were more clearly intended by their Athenian painters for female viewers and cast the activity in a different light. These instances challenge any assumption that *xainein* indicates a prostitute and bolster the contrary claims of Milne and Plant. Noteworthy is a fragmentary kylix by the Stieglitz Painter dedicated at the Sanctuary of

Artemis at Brauron.[23] The white-ground interior depicts a girl with hydria approaching a fountain, while the red-figure exterior shows women gathered in a house, including one working wool against her bare leg. Given Artemis's role as protector of girls and women and the habitual dedication of textiles at Brauron, the selection of this cup as a votive was particularly appropriate. It also demonstrates that kylikes were not limited to men and *symposia*.[24] The fragile white-ground technique guarantees that the cup was never meant for drinking, and, along with other white-ground cups found in sanctuaries, it may have been a bespoke commission.

A red-figure pyxis attributed to the Painter of Philadelphia 2449 and in The Met's collection situates

fig. 5 Athenian red-figure pyxis. Attributed to the Painter of Philadelphia 2449, ca. 460 BCE. Terracotta, H. with cover 4⅝ in. (11.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1906 (06.1117a, b)

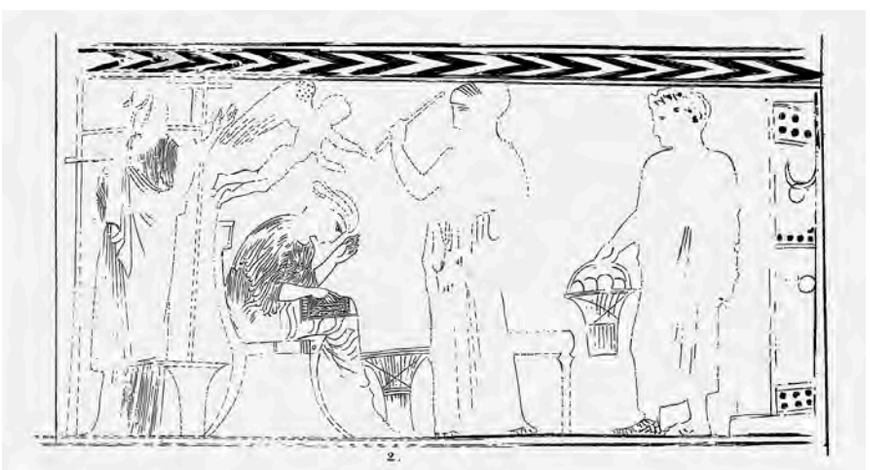

fig. 6 Athenian red-figure epinetron, ca. 425 BCE. Terracotta, L. 9½ in. (24 cm). National Archaeological Museum, Athens (2179). Drawing after Robert 1892, pl. 13

a combing or carding figure among a group including multiple spinners (fig. 5).[25] Pyxides were usually meant for the Attic home market and for women as cosmetic or jewelry containers.[26] More demonstrably associated with a wedding is a black-figure lebes gamikos in Cerveteri, a type of nuptial vase, where a busy young woman discreetly revealing her calf while working is joined by industrious friends or relatives.[27] Finally, the motif appears on some ceramic epinetra, which may have assisted exactly this task.[28] A black-figure epinetron from an Attic grave clarifies why someone would hitch up her skirt in the first place: as two women gather roves to store in a wool basket (*kalathos*), a third who has prepared them washes her leg free of dirt and debris.[29] On a red-figure epinetron likewise from an Attic grave, a seated woman has covered her clothed thigh with her own epinetron, showing an alternative to working wool against a bare leg (fig. 6).[30] A man usually interpreted as her husband arrives in the same space, his presence possibly explaining her desire to stay covered.

Textile production is portrayed in all these images as a communal activity. As much as the members of a sculpture, ceramic, or other, more public-facing and male-dominated workshop, the girls and women of a family or friend group who engaged in making cloth constituted a community of practice, their work an embodied and embedded process.[31] Whatever artistic license vase painters took with a particular scene, the physicality and sociality of textile production are consistently conveyed. The quintessential example can be found on an Attic black-figure lekythos in The Met, where the Amasis Painter detailed multiple stages of production: weighing wool, spinning, weaving on a warp-weighted loom (*histos*), and folding finished cloth (fig. 7).[32] The harmonious coordination of the women's efforts is echoed in the scene on the lekythos's shoulder, where a chorus of dancing figures surround what is likely a seated bride with her groom.[33] This identification is supported by the wreath the seated woman holds and the gesture of opening or adjusting her himation, often interpreted as nuptial in character. The vertical alignment of bride and *histos* further suggests the wool-workers are making the textiles she wears and others for her married life. Female viewers may have made synesthetic connections between the rhythmic soundscapes of chorus and loom, from the pounding of dancing feet to the beating of the weft and tinkling of loom weights.[34]

Textile production was, at the same time, a highly individualized practice. In literary sources, female

fig. 7 Athenian black-figure lekythos. Attributed to the Amasis Painter, ca. 550–530 BCE. Terracotta, H. 6¾ in. (17.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1931 (31.11.10)

characters are capable of recognizing their handiwork after many years, surely recalling the development of distinctive styles by real-life women.[35] Textile tools could likewise be deeply personal in their selection and usage, reflective of woolworking as an embodied craft. Anne-Sophie Noel has argued that the *organa* to which Deianeira bids farewell before committing suicide in Sophokles's *Trachiniai* (904–6) are her textile tools, in a moment "charged with emotions related to her own experience as a female weaver and her own female agency."[36] Along with textiles themselves, spindle whorls, loom weights, and other tools were frequent votives dedicated by women in sanctuaries. Inscribed or otherwise decorated loom weights from Metaponto, Morgantina, and other Greek sites in South Italy and Sicily—including Taras—demonstrate not only the strong link between tools and personal identity, but also the extent of women's social networks.[37]

The inscription on Melosa's cup captures both a local community of woolworkers and the individuality behind their respective practices, manifest through competition. The women preparing roves on vases seem no different in age than their coworkers (figs. 4–6), but it is possible that Melosa and her fellow competitors were younger girls, the word *korai* implying they were unmarried. Training in textile production began early, involving a scaffolding method of learning and, in the parlance of modern performance studies, body-to-body transmission.[38] It is not difficult to imagine the preparation of roves as one of the skills first mastered, with the efficiency and motor coordination expected from the job inspiring competitions for young learners. *Agones* in textile production are otherwise unattested aside from the myth of Athena and Arachne, which might preserve such a tradition.[39] It is worth recalling, however, that competitive footraces and choral contests for girls are well known in Sparta.[40] Just as those activities were a form of training for the girls' futures, achievement in tasks like combing wool would have signaled their potential as makers of textiles and generators of household wealth. Recent scholarship has stressed that Greek women of all social classes were active economic agents despite the relative invisibility of their labors and has noted the necessity of recognizing those contributions for a holistic understanding of economic systems.[41] The ritual dimension of textile production formed another critical aspect for women across the Greek world. At Sparta, textual sources attest to freeborn girls and women producing garments for Artemis Orthia and Apollo Amyklaios at their respective sanctuaries.[42]

SHAPE, IMAGE, INSCRIPTION

Having reconsidered Melosa's inscription in light of iconographic evidence and broader contexts of textile production, I turn next to the cup on which it appears (figs. 1–3). Previous commentators have downplayed the material aspects of the cup, using them only to discern Melosa's social status; I propose, however, that these were central to the cup's selection and reception as a *nikaterion*. Nafissi believed the cup a strange gift for a young woman and deemed its sympotic shape support for Melosa's identity as a *hetaira*.[43] Gloria Ferrari found it sufficiently incongruous to doubt the contest's reality altogether: "A sympotic vessel makes an improbable trophy for a girl, even granting that there was such a thing as wool-carding contests. In all likelihood, this is yet another dirty joke that exploits the juxtaposition of opposite kinds of working girls."[44] Plant countered these arguments by observing that all sorts of women partook of wine in the Greek world, and that Athenian evidence for *hetairai* and the *symposion* should not be taken as indicative of other communities.[45] Despite these salient points, he granted minimal attention to the cup as an object.

fig. 8 Athenian black-figure eye cup (fig. 1) showing a scene of warriors around the handle

fig. 9 Athenian black-figure eye cup (fig. 1) showing Menelaos leading Helen from Troy (the Recovery of Helen)

Melosa's cup joins an expansive series of Athenian and other Greek (including Lakonian) drinking vessels exported to Taras, but at the same time stands apart from them. Excavations of the early and mid-twentieth century yielded Archaic-period graves where kylikes appeared in groups inside or sometimes outside tombs, left as offerings by mourners.[46] Imported Attic cups have also been found as votives at local shrines, including the spring sanctuary at Satyrion (Saturo) twelve kilometers southeast of Taras, thought to have been dedicated to Aphrodite *Basilis* (the Queen, also worshipped at Sparta).[47] So-called komast, Siana, and Little Master cups represent the majority of imported Athenian kylikes, most hovering around twenty centimeters in diameter, optimal for drinking. Larger cups like that of Melosa are fewer in number. Type A eye cups in particular are uncommon among Tarentine finds; in this period, the majority of Attic eye cups were exported to Etruria, most larger than average and some truly monumental.[48]

Melosa's cup must have been sufficiently unique in Taras to appear special to the person choosing it as a *nikaterion*. With its deep bowl nearly thirty centimeters in diameter, it exceeded most other local Attic imports in size, and its capacity to hold a substantial amount of wine rendered it better suited for display than drinking.[49] These characteristics, along with the high quality of potting and decoration, may have occasioned its selection. The eye motif and quadripartite schema with figures between the eyes and under the handles were recent innovations, while the copious usage of incision and post-firing added color enhanced its appeal. The status of the cup as an import from the Greek mainland likely boosted its cachet.

What of the figural iconography? Milne stated, "we shall note only that the subject matter is surprising for a vase given as a prize in a girls' wool-working contest," and Plant mentions the imagery only in passing.[50] I suggest that the cup's iconography was integral to its appropriation and transformation. At the most surface level, the victory-trumpeting inscription complemented the agonistic subject matter of dueling warriors, perhaps humorously (figs. 2, 8). There is, however, another layer of meaning: despite the lack of name labels, the combats can be ascribed to the Trojan War based on the warrior leading a woman (figs. 1, 9). They are Menelaos and Helen, mythical rulers of Sparta, in the narrative moment known as the Recovery of Helen at the fall of Troy. One of the most common Trojan War themes in Athenian black-figure pottery, the Recovery is found mostly on amphorae (fig. 10) but sometimes on other

fig. 10 Athenian black-figure amphora. Attributed to the Group of Würzburg 199, ca. 510–500 BCE. Terracotta, H. 17⅝ in. (44 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Seth Kettell Sweetser Fund (60.790)

shapes.[51] Alternate versions of the scene on The Met's kylix appear on eye cups in Bonn, with Menelaos leading Helen toward the left, and Mannheim, where the pair are joined by another warrior.[52]

Sixth-century Recovery scenes can be broadly divided into the so-called menace type, in which Menelaos confronts Helen face-to-face, and the escort type, where Menelaos leads his reclaimed wife from the doomed city (figs. 9, 10).[53] Although Lilly Kahil believed the menace type derived from the now-lost *Little Iliad* of Lesches and escort type from the lost *Ilioupersis* of Arktinos, likely neither stems from a specific text.[54] The "menace" motif also appears in art beyond Athens, including a ceramic pithos from Mykonos; Argive bronze shield-bands from Olympia, one labeled Helen and Menelaos to secure their identification; and a stone stele from Lakonia itself.[55]

Characteristics of the escort scene type as featured on The Met's cup include Menelaos's sword, Helen drawing her himation away from her face, and the couple's mutual gaze (fig. 9). Flaking of the white pigment once marking Helen's face diminishes the effect of the gaze, but their eye contact can be seen in other examples of the Recovery (fig. 10). Helen's veil-gesture owes much to wedding iconography (compare with fig. 7), as does Menelaos grasping her by the hand or wrist, obscured by her cloak on the cup. More rare among "escort" scenes is the pose Helen adopts here. Typically, she stands with feet together (fig. 10), but in about a dozen instances, including on The Met's cup, she steps forward.[56]

The popularity of the Recovery of Helen on Attic vases has raised questions. Why was this episode favored over others in the Trojan cycle? A substantial number of black-figure Recovery vases were exported to Etruria (including probably fig. 10), so was there a particular resonance for this story in ancient Italy? What moral messages, if any, were Greek, Etruscan, or other viewers expecting to see? Many answers depend on the identity of the ancient viewer, but most would have regarded Helen's return to Sparta as a happy ending, or at least a satisfying one. Menelaos's honor is restored, Helen atones for the error of her ways (and, according to some sources, it had all been Aphrodite's doing), and when seen back home in Sparta in the *Odyssey*, the couple welcomes Odysseus's son Telemachos and behaves as if contentedly married. Modern commentators have tended to emphasize the gendered violence behind Recovery images, but this approach risks a modern perspective rather than an ancient one.[57] Unpalatable as Menelaos's aggression might seem to twenty-first-century sensibilities, to most ancient viewers—including women looking at this cup—Helen deserved, but transcended, this moment to regain her rightful place as wife and queen.

Given the Recovery's composition on this cup and other vases, one may question the power dynamics between the couple and whether Helen lacks agency as much as it seems. At first glance, her posture of following her husband while wrapped in her himation might imply submission and *aidos* (modesty, even shame). Her direct gaze to Menelaos, however, does not and distinguishes her from other captive women in Athenian iconography. In Greek optical theory, the gaze of a beloved (for instance, a bride) has the ability to inspire *eros* in a lover (a groom), even unintentionally.[58] In Homer's poems, a woman's veil can itself carry erotic undertones: while Hera prepares to seduce Zeus in the *Iliad* (14.185), her veil, "white shining like the sun," crowns her alluring ensemble.[59] In the *Odyssey* (18.208–13), Athena enhances Penelope's desirability to devastating effect: "she [Penelope] stood by the doorpost of the well-built hall, holding before her face her shining veil. . . . On the spot the knees of the suitors were loosened, indeed with passion [*eros*] their hearts were enchanted, and they all prayed to lie beside her in bed."[60]

In a later group of fifth-century Recovery scenes, the impact of Helen's beauty on Menelaos is conveyed as he drops his sword to chase her, sometimes with Eros and/or Aphrodite helping to convert his anger to ardor.[61] In sixth-century images of both the "menace" and "escort" types, Helen's erotic power is more subtly communicated but is no less present. On The Met's cup, her himation envelops Menelaos, with much of his right arm disappearing into it (fig. 9).[62] Her colored and patterned garments grant her significant visual weight and establish her as Menelaos's compositional equal, an effect that would have been amplified with her originally white-painted skin. Is this another form of agon, like the evenly matched warriors on the cup's opposite side (fig. 2)—but who is subduing whom?

In terms of The Met's cup as Melosa's prize, it does not seem coincidental that Helen was renowned for her dazzling woolwork as well as for her disarming beauty. On an early fifth-century Attic red-figure pyxis, she is even depicted making roves.[63] When she first appears in the *Iliad*, she is weaving "a great cloth, a crimson cloak of double thickness, and was working in the many trials of the Trojan horse-breakers and bronze-clad Achaeans, trials which for her sake they had suffered under the hand of Ares" (3.125–28).[64] Ancient scholia recognized Helen's weaving in this passage as a metaphor for the work of the poet himself.[65] When Telemachos visits Sparta (*Od*. 4.119–36), Homer speaks of Helen's golden distaff and silver wheeled workbasket as gifts of Alkandre in Egypt, parallel to the gifts Alkandre's husband had given Menelaos and exemplary of the networks forged among women.[66] Telemachos later receives his own gifts of guest-friendship (*xenia*) from the couple, and the networks of women are once more conjured through Helen's choice, a peplos she herself had made: "I give you this gift, dear child, as a reminder (*mnema*) of the hands of Helen, for the time of much-desired marriage, for your wife to wear. But for now, lay it beside your dear mother [Penelope] in the palace" (*Od*. 15.125–28).[67] The word *mnema* to characterize an object is otherwise used in Homer for gifts exchanged between men, such as armor or bronze vessels, but Helen's peplos differs from these in being created by the giver.[68] As Melissa Mueller observes, "the peplos is a material piece of Helen's *kleos* that Telemachos will take back to Ithaca for his future wife."[69] The poet stresses its craftsmanship, saying that among Helen's textiles it was "the most beautiful and ample in its decoration" and "shone like a star" (*Od*. 15.106–8).[70] Later in date than Melosa's cup—but according to an ancient scholiast inspired by Stesichoros's sixth-century poem *Helen*—Theocritus's *Idyll* 18 features an *epithalamion* to Helen on the occasion of her wedding to Menelaos, filled with her girlfriends' praise: "No one winds from her basket yarn as good as hers, or at the patterned loom cuts from the tall beams a closer weft once she has woven it with her shuttle" (32–34).[71]

The Athenian painter of The Met's cup perhaps alluded to the literary tradition with Helen's *chiton* and himation of diverse patterns and stripes, enriched through incision and added color (fig. 9). Her *chiton*'s lotus-cross motifs appear starlike as if to suggest radiance, while her himation recalls textiles dyed with precious murex-derived purple.[72] Garments worn by Menelaos and the other warriors are likewise elaborated, as are their armor and weaponry (figs. 2, 8). These details plus the patterns conjured by staring eyes and intertwined bodies around the cup's circumference lend a unified, rhythmic aspect to the decoration. In the language of Archaic-period aesthetics, one thinks of *poikilia*, a multivalent term that along with its many variants could be applied to textiles, metalwork, painting, and even music.[73] Often translated as "multicolored," *poikilos/poikilia* could also refer to the play of light over a surface; the interplay of patterns on inanimate objects or living things (like animal skin or bird plumage); and/or intricacy of craftsmanship.[74] Helen's own textile in the *Odyssey* is described with a *poikil*-rooted word (*poikilmasin*). Inspired in part by textiles and metalwork, Athenian vase painters embraced the pleasures and playfulness of *poikilia* in their creations. With its variegated patterns and colors and lustrous black gloss outside and in, Melosa's cup ranked among them. The viewer was invited to lift and turn the cup, to look closely and admire its many particulars, down to the warrior using one of the eyes for a shield (fig. 11).

Girls and women in Taras and elsewhere—including those encountering this cup—would have heard about Helen's woolworking and other tales of Troy while engaged in their own textile production. Rooted as they were in oral practice and transmission, songs sung and stories told among women do not survive today, but ample references can be found in male-authored texts.[75] In their respective first appearances in the *Odyssey,* both Kalypso and Kirke sing while working at their looms (5.61–62, 10.221–23). Odysseus and his men hear Kirke before they see her, and from her song, Polites knows she must be weaving (10.226–28). Early in Euripides's *Ion*, the chorus of enslaved women who form Kreusa's retinue spot the sculptures of Apollo's temple at Delphi, one reacting excitedly to a scene of Herakles and the Hydra (194–200): "And near him

fig. 11 Athenian black-figure eye cup (fig. 1) showing a scene of warriors around the handle

another raises the blazing torch! Is it he whose story I heard as I plied my loom, shield-bearing Iolaos, who took up shared labors with the son of Zeus and helped him to endure them?"[76] The women know this and other myths and are capable of recognizing them iconographically, whether from legends they heard, objects they saw, or story-cloth they themselves wove. In Theocritus's *Idyll* 24, the prophet Tiresias reassures Herakles's mother, Alkmene, of future reverence: "By the sweet light long gone from these eyes of mine, many of the women of Greece, as by hand they rub the soft yarn on their knees at nightfall, will celebrate the name of Alkmene in song" (75–79).[77] Might Melosa's contest have involved not only woolwork, but singing?

The cult status that Helen held in Sparta is worth recalling in the context of the cup. Her worship in Taras remains unattested, but sources mention a local cult of her brothers, the Dioskouroi, and her husband, Menelaos, via the Atreidai, with other Lakonian heroes and deities worshipped there.[78] At Sparta, Pausanias alludes to an as-yet-undiscovered shrine of Helen within the city (3.15.3), while both texts and archaeological finds identify the Menelaion, jointly dedicated to Helen and Menelaos and situated outside the city at Therapne.[79] The earliest inscribed votive from the Menelaion, a bronze aryballos from the end of the seventh century, names "Helen, wife of Menelaos" as its recipient. Helen's name also appears on an early bronze meat-hook (*kreagra*), suggesting sacrificial ritual in her honor.[80] Recent excavations have refined the Menelaion's chronology to include building activity in the late seventh–early sixth centuries BCE and further construction in the mid-sixth century. Thousands of bronze, lead, terracotta, and other votives survive from the Archaic period.

For this discussion, it matters less whether the cultic Helen was regarded in Sparta as goddess, heroine, or both, with ancient sources and modern scholars of divided opinion.[81] More critical is her patronage of girls and women. Among Archaic-period votives at the Menelaion are textile tools (namely loom weights and spindle whorls) and lead plaques seeming to depict articles of clothing, perhaps standing in for actual garments although now-lost textiles may have also been

offered.[82] Literary sources thought to reference Helen's Spartan cult mention choruses of girls, unsurprising given Sparta's local tradition of *partheneia* (maidens' songs).[83] Together with allusion to her prowess in textile work, Theocritus's *Idyll* 18 names Helen as head of a girls' chorus prior to her marriage. *Partheneia* and other songs propagated her myth and worship among Spartan girls, and one may speculate that similar cultic and poetic traditions could be found in Taras.

Considered in tandem, the cup's shape, iconography, and aesthetic details are more appropriate for a woolworking prize in Taras than has been recognized. This realization is advanced by the prize inscription itself, whose writer took maximum advantage of the cup's materiality and mobility (figs. 2, 3). She or he chose the broad space of the foot on which to write, the most visible location when the cup was turned in the hands or hung on a wall by a handle (figs. 8, 11). The letters are inscribed largely and deeply enough to stand out against the unglazed orange, forming a methodical arch and with their height occupying less than half of the available space. The writer may have experienced some difficulty scratching into the hardened clay, as the letters are neither completely uniform in size nor regularly spaced.

The first-person perspective of the text transforms the cup into a so-called speaking object that both addresses the viewer-reader and invites him or her to assume its voice. Speaking objects (*oggetti parlanti* in modern scholarship) date to the earliest surviving specimens of Greek writing, many of them drinking vessels dedicated in sanctuaries or placed in graves.[84] Speaking inscriptions do not render objects animate in the most literal sense but do endow them with a degree of agency.[85] On The Met's cup, this agential effect was heightened by the prominent, even uncanny eyes lending a masklike quality and the text ringing its "mouth" (figs. 2, 9)—even more so in the low, flickering light of a torch or lamp, as the cup was likely often seen. Melosa's name opens the inscription and was aligned with the edge of one handle when the cup was tipped in this direction or hung on a wall (fig. 8). "I am the victory prize" (ἐμὶ νικατέριον) fills the space delineated by the eyes above, *nikaterion* attested in surviving Greek here for the first time. The next phrase ("she won the girls' wool-combing contest," χαίνοσα τὰς κόρας ἐνίκε) begins near the other handle and would be most legible if the cup were hung this way (fig. 11). In Greek syntax, "she won" becomes the final word, the inscription ending near Helen's feet. To appreciate the text most fully, one needed to activate and rotate the cup in the hands.[86] To a female viewer-reader, the orientation of the inscription and motion of turning the cup while reading might recall the constant twisting, winding, and turning of tools and wool while making roves or spinning thread.

Neither explicitly votive like many *oggetti parlanti* ("[name] dedicated me") nor a simple owner's label, Melosa's inscription reads like a proclamation, its tone and language recalling athletic and military epigrams.[87] A sixth-century bronze discus from Lakonia, for example, features the inscription "Melas won me at the Pythia" (Μέλας μ' ἐνίκε Πυθαιεῖ), also circularly inscribed.[88] Although not hexameter in epic style, Melosa's inscription is metrical, with "three first epitrites followed by a catalectic dimeter."[89] It thus functioned like any epigram, and with the speech-act of Melosa's victory, the cup became a herald (*keryx*) like those at festivals and games. So too did the viewer-reader, as the cup's material presence encouraged not only visual and haptic engagement, but also oral (re)performance. Any act of reading reenacted Melosa's success; proclaimed and memorialized her *kleos*; and perpetuated her achievement as the cup was handled, displayed, and deposited.[90] Perhaps the cup was displayed in a room that in the evenings served as an *andron* for *symposia*—when Melosa herself, if correctly characterized as "respectable," would not be present—but during the day was a flexible space for woolworking and other women's activities.[91]

By recording the occasion for which it was awarded and through the act of giving, the cup further became a biographical object in a Homeric sense, worthy of preservation and commemoration.[92] In Homer, such objects include the two-handled urn given by Achilles to Nestor as a *mnema* of Patroklos at the latter's funerary games (*Il*. 23.618–19); the cup presented to Telemachos by Menelaos as a *mnema* of his visit to Sparta (*Od*. 4.590–92); and the cup awarded to Odysseus by Alkinous as a *mnema* of himself and to pour gifts to the gods (*Od*. 8.431–42). All of these were crafted from precious metal and more economically valuable, but the size of Melosa's ceramic cup, its handsome potting and painting, and its pedigree as an import nonetheless augmented its status as a prestige object and a *mnema* of her *nike*. As noted above, the term *mnema* was used in the *Odyssey* for the textile made and relayed by Helen to Telemachos's future wife. When The Met's cup was entombed with Melosa (or another family member), it operated as a *mnema* of another sort, as the term was used interchangably in the Archaic period with others for funerary monuments.[93]

CONCLUSIONS

The itinerary of Melosa's cup across time and space exemplifies the entanglement of ancient Greek pottery in a series of commercial and social networks. Judging from the distribution of early eye cups, the workshop in Athens likely intended it for westward export, building on a known preference for stemmed cups in the Italian peninsula, including large eye cups in Etruria.[94] This cup, however, landed in Taras, where Attic kylikes of various size and form had been imported for decades. Ancient sources suggest that recreational wine drinking was more of a pastime locally than was the case in Taras's mother city, Sparta; true or not, excavated Tarentine graves regularly feature cups in their assemblages, and local tradition finds a series of terracotta male banqueters serving as votives at shrines, holding rhyta, phialai, or kantharoi for drinking.[95]

Based on its epigrammatic inscription, The Met's eye cup defies modern and perhaps ancient expectations. It did not belong to a man, but to a certain Melosa proclaimed as victorious in a wool-combing contest, a girl or young woman and *agon* otherwise unattested. Regardless if one interprets Melosa as a *hetaira* or well-born *kore*—and I follow Milne and Plant in advocating for the latter—the inscription and, importantly, the kinetic act of writing transformed the cup into a speaking agent capable of preserving and propagating Melosa's achievement and memory. It became a *mnema* of Melosa's *kleos*, like so-called biographical objects in Homer. The inscription reads as an appropriation of male agonistic language, but celebrating an act of creation over the destruction implied by military victory. I have argued that this metamorphosis was a purposeful process: from the selection of the cup in full awareness of the implications behind its shape and Trojan War–themed iconography, to the composition and writing of its inscription, to its eventual display and deposition. The connection with Helen of Sparta seems especially apt, given her own elevation over her peers in ancient sources and her patronage of girls and women in the Lakonian cultic tradition (figs. 1, 9).

The lives of girls and women in the Greek world existed on a largely ephemeral plane. Lin Foxhall, for example, has distinguished between the "written pasts of polities and communities" and what she calls the alternative pasts, often orally transmitted, of women and families.[96] Melosa's cup serves as witness to a person and event that otherwise would have been lost, like most ancient textiles. As such, the inscription is a significant historical document, as scholars have recognized.[97] But the cup was equally an object capable of being held, written upon, talked about, and hung with pride. The inscription cannot be separated from the rest of the cup, with form, decoration, and text—all aspects of the cup as material object—instead working together. Approaching the cup in this way acknowledges the agency of everyone involved, including Melosa and the cup itself.

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NOTES

1 MMA 44.11.1: *BAPD* 13330; Milne 1944 and 1945; Richter 1953, 15–16, pls. 25–26 (condition described as "Broken at rim with a small piece restored"); Jordan 1988, 24, no. C19; Kahil 1988, 546, no. 291, pl. 345; Nafissi 1998; Plant 2024; Saunders and O'Neil 2024, 147, pl. 14.

2 Richter 1953, 15. The condition of the cup implies discovery in a grave, not votive deposit where vessels are more fragmentary. The description "suburbs of Taranto" could refer to a site farther afield, such as Satyrion (Saturo) twelve kilometers to the southeast. Archaic-period graves with Attic cups have been found around Satyrion (see, for example, Quagliati 1903a), and a collection of Tarentine-style terracottas formerly in the Hirsch collection and now at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, is said to come from this area.

3 Milne 1945, 528; Jeffery 1990, 279–80, no. 1. Thus χαίνοσα would be elsewhere spelled ξαίωσα and Melosa's name with a long vowel (Μελώσα). Punctuation marks appear throughout the inscription, including mistakenly in the middle of νικατέριον. Taras was famed for its textile industry; see Milne 1945, 528, and Meo 2017.

4 For quadripartite cups with figures between the eyes and around the handles, see Jordan 1988, 24, nos. C17–25.

5 Bloesch 1940, 8, no. 3.

6 An omicron-iota inscription (OI) also appears in the recess of the foot, best seen in person rather than a photograph (Richter 1953, 16). OI does not figure among so-called trademarks catalogued in Johnston 2006; however, two red-figure bell kraters preserve the inscription *oinochoai* (ibid., 160–61, nos. 22F1–2). OI may be a batch inscription indicating the cup's shipment with oinochoai. Alternatively, OI abbreviates a name, for instance, of the trader, the cup's owner, or the writer of the Melosa inscription. The least likely possibility is that OI designates a price of one obol, which seems too inexpensive.

7 For example, Boyes, Steele, and Astoreca 2021; Whitley 2021; Kotsonas 2022; Angliker and Bultrighini 2023; Fassberg 2023; Miller 2025. See Mertens 2010, 20–24, for a history of Greek vase painting studies.

8 Namely, the so-called spinning *hetaira* debate, tracing to Rodenwaldt 1932. See, for example, Bundrick 2008, 295–309, and Bundrick 2016. Recent studies question modern assumptions about *hetairai* and sex work: for example, Konstantinos Kapparis (2018) characterizes most modern usages of the term *hetaira* as imprecise and anachronistic, and Claire Taylor (2020) cautions against using names alone to identify sex workers.

9 Milne 1944, 110–11; Milne 1945. Plant (2024, 336) mischaracterizes Milne as supportive of Melosa being a *hetaira*: Milne does acknowledge the inclusion of Melosa's name as possibly pointing to a *hetaira* ("a circumstance which seems at first glance to speak very badly for the owner of our kylix") but ultimately argues against it.

10 Nafissi 1998; Fischer 2011, 14. For difficulties of recognizing sex workers in iconography, see, for example, Kapparis 2018, 338–65.

11 Plant (2024) speculates whether Melosa wrote the inscription. The widely used term "respectable" is admittedly problematic but reflects an ancient point of view (although, as Taylor 2020 notes, the perception of respectability was fluid).

12 Plant 2024, 336.

13 For the etymology of the name, see Milne 1945, 531–33, and Plant 2024, 337–38.

14 Pelike by Polygnotos, Musée du Louvre, Paris, G375: Beazley 1963, 1032, no. 54; *BAPD* 213437. Stamnos by Polygnotos, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, V522/G290: Beazley 1963, 1028, no. 3; *BAPD* 213384. Calyx krater attributed to the Group of Polygnotos, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, B769: Beazley 1963, 1037, no. 3; *BAPD* 213491. Amphora by the Peleus Painter, British Museum, London, E271: Beazley 1963, 1039, no. 13; *BAPD* 213511. The fifth vase is an earlier, fragmentary cup attributed to Oltos, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, Vatican City, Astarita 701: Beazley 1963, 1623, no. 66ter; *BAPD* 275029 (the name given to a maenad).

15 Hauser in Furtwängler, Hauser, and Reichhold 1932, 107; Milne 1945, 532; Plant 2024, 337.

16 For example, Hedreen 2016; Kapparis 2018, 351–53; Taylor 2020.

17 Although some have wondered if the names are fictitious, Sarah Pomeroy (2002, 144–45) advocates for the girls being actual people.

18 Plant 2024, 338.

19 Gleba 2008, 97–100; Spantidaki 2016, 33–37.

20 See Plant 2024, 340–41, for textual references, namely Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* (536) and *Ecclesiazousai* (88–94), arguing against Nafissi 1998. To Plant's bibliography, add Swalec 2016, stressing the nuptial/marital undertones of the *Lysistrata* passage.

21 Staatliche Museen-Antikensammlung, Berlin, F2289: Beazley 1963, 426, 435, no. 95; *BAPD* 205141. See also a kylix attributed to the Stieglitz Painter with the interior showing one woman making roves and another with a mirror, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence, 3918: Beazley 1963, 827, no. 7; *BAPD* 210261; Mercati 2003, 228, pl. 53.

22 Nafissi 1998, 34–39. Fischer (2011, 14) uses scenes of combing or carding as evidence for sex workers but only mentions the cups cited in note 21 above. Sian Lewis (2002, 63) and Eva Keuls (1983, 222) stop short of describing the women as prostitutes but characterize the scenes on both cups as "salacious."

23 Archaeological Museum, Brauron: Beazley 1963, 827, no. 1; *BAPD* 210255; Kahil 1963, 18–19, no. 37, and pl. 9.

24 Plant (2024, 339) offers two examples of drinking vessels beyond Melosa's with post-firing inscriptions referring to women: a Boeotian kantharos inscribed as a gift from husband to wife, and an Athenian kylix deposited in a Kamiros grave and inscribed in Rhodian dialect: "I am the painted cup of the beautiful Philto."

25 MMA 06.1117a, b: Beazley 1963, 815, no. 3; *BAPD* 210088.

26 It seems possible that pyxides may sometimes have held textile tools, given examples with woolworking scenes such as a white-ground pyxis, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 65.1166 (Painter of London D12), *BAPD* 3345, with a non-Attic Greek inscription marking it a gift between women: "Lysandra gave [it] to Lysimachis."

27 From Tomb 90 of the Bufaloreccia cemetery, Cerveteri, Museo Nazionale Archeologico Cerite 67429: Mercati 2003, 227, pl. 52 (otherwise unpublished).

28 For epinetra, see Mercati 2003 (including the catalogue on 112–49) and Stern 2020; both with further references.

29 National Archaeological Museum, Athens 2183: Mercati 2003, 115–16, no. A13; Stern 2020, 66, fig. 1.

30 National Archaeological Museum, Athens 2179: *BAPD* 865; Mercati 2003, 142, no. B17; Bundrick 2008, 308, fig. 11.

31 Enslaved women would have formed part of the workforce in Athenian homes that could afford them (see Tsakirgis 2016); the imagery, however, rarely differentiates between enslaved and citizen workers, nor between textiles made for home use or sale.

32 MMA 31.11.10: Beazley 1956, 154, no. 57; *BAPD* 310485.

33 Association with the wedding is supported by the companion vase (MMA 56.11.1: Beazley 1971, 66; *BAPD* 350478). See Lonsdale 1993, 217–18, and Steiner 2021, 425–27.

34 For the soundscape of a loom, see Öhrman 2020, and for connections between song, dance, and weaving in Greek culture, see Steiner 2021, 405–89.

35 For example, Elektra in Aischylos's *Choephoroi* (231) and Kreusa in Euripides's *Ion* (1417–25).

36 Noel 2020, 90. See Theocritus's *Idyll* 28, which is addressed to an ivory distaff meant as a gift to a female friend. The distaff is characterized as a co-worker who will help bring renown among other women and provide remembrance of the friend-giver.

37 See Gleba 2008, 137; Sofroniew 2011; Foxhall 2012, 199–205; Quercia and Foxhall 2014; Longhitano 2021; and Longhitano 2022. For women's social networks, see Taylor 2011.

38 See Foxhall 2012, 194–99. For ethnographic parallels for intergenerational learning, see Hedlund 1999; Greenfield 2004; Portisch 2009; and Lee 2014. For learning in communities of practice, see, for example, Minar and Crown 2001 and Lee 2014, 32–49.

39 The story of Athena and Arachne does not survive textually until Virgil and Ovid, but may have existed earlier; see Plant 2024, 342.

40 Pomeroy 2002, 3–27; Millender 2018.

41 See Taylor 2024.

42 Pomeroy 2002, 30–31. Pomeroy observes that in Sparta enslaved women were expected to undertake the majority of everyday textile work.

43 Nafissi 1998, 31.

44 Ferrari 2002, 59.

45 Plant 2024, 338–40.

46 For example, Quagliati 1903a and 1903b; Lo Porto 1959, 1959–60, and 1961.

47 Lippolis 2009, 430.

48 See Bundrick 2015 and 2019, 93–126, with earlier references for eye cups.
49 Another Type A eye cup from the Melusa Group has the following measurements (Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich, 2031: *BAPD* 9031520; Fellmann 2004, 23): H. 12.4 cm, diam. 29.2 cm, weight 0.96 kg, estimated volume 2.55 liters. Even partly filled, The Met's cup seems impractical for drinking at its comparable size.
50 Milne 1945, 528; Plant 2024.
51 Kahil 1955; Kahil 1988, 537–52, 559–61; Hedreen 1996; Masters 2012; Stansbury-O'Donnell 2014; Stelow 2020, 207–27; Masters 2021. Saunders, O'Neil, and Turner (2024, 99) briefly raise this question: "Was the transformation of this [Melosa's] cup . . . into a girl's prize for wool working solely the consequence of its being an import, or could it also have owed something to the depiction of the legendarily beautiful Helen and her carefully rendered garments?" Amphora attributed to the Group of Würzburg 199, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 60.790: Beazley 1971, 126, no. 12bis; *BAPD* 340520. Graph of shapes: Masters 2021, 92, fig. 4.
52 Akademisches Kunstmuseum, Bonn, 3153: *BAPD* 5027; Bentz, Geominy, and Müller 2010, 27, no. 11. Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen, Mannheim, CG38: *BAPD* 11997.
53 Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell (2014, 243) identifies eighty-eight "escort" scenes in his unpublished database. Although none of the sixth-century black-figure examples include names, Helen and Menelaos are labeled on a red-figure fragment by Oltos, Museum of Western and Eastern Art, Odessa, 21972: Beazley 1963, 67, no. 137; *BAPD* 200577.
54 Kahil 1955, 71–98 ("menace" type) and 99–112 ("escort" type). For discussion, see, for example, Hedreen 1996 and Stansbury-O'Donnell 2014, 242.
55 Pithos, Mykonos Museum 2240: Kahil 1988, no. 225. Inscribed shield-band, Olympia Museum B4475: ibid., no. 69a. The Lakonian relief stele from Magoula is in the Sparta Museum; see ibid., no. 230.
56 Stansbury-O'Donnell (2014, 243) mentions thirteen instances.
57 For challenges of interpreting gendered violence in Greco-Roman art and literature, see Deacy, Magalhães, and Menzies 2023.
58 Cairns 2005; see also Toscano 2013.
59 Translation from Alexander 2015, 297.
60 Translation from Murray 1919, 215–16.
61 Kahil 1988, 542–44, nos. 260–77. Stansbury-O'Donnell (2014, 249–51) argues for a comic element to this variation.
62 Samantha Masters (2021, 94–95) notes the phallic undertones of Menelaos's sword.
63 Identified by inscription: British Museum, London, E773; Beazley 1963, 805, no. 89, 1670; *BAPD* 209970.
64 Translation from Alexander 2015, 57.
65 Mueller 2010, 1.
66 See ibid., 7–8.
67 Translation from Canevaro 2018, 51.
68 See Mueller 2010, 10–13, and Canevaro 2018, 50–54.
69 Mueller 2010, 11.
70 Translation from Murray 1919, 85.
71 Translation from Hopkinson 2015, 263.
72 Finds of murex shells attest to this dye's production in Taras; Meo 2017, 57–58. For the association of textile patterns with stars in the Homeric tradition, see Lather 2021, 21–28, and Mangieri 2024, 61–64.
73 For *poikilia*, see Lather 2021 and Bundrick 2024, with earlier references.
74 On the Attic cup inscribed as belonging to the Rhodian Philto mentioned above, the adjective translated as "painted" is rooted in *poikilos*.
75 Tuck 2009; Heath 2011; Karanika 2014.
76 Translation from Kovacs 1999, 339.
77 Translation from Hopkinson 2015, 331.
78 See the summary in Nafissi 1999, with references.
79 Meskanen 2019, 119–47; Stelow 2020, 258–84; Pavlides 2023, 103–20; Parker n.d. (forthcoming).
80 Catling and Cavanagh 1976.
81 For example, Parker n.d. (forthcoming).
82 Terracotta loom weights: Thompson 1908–9, 124; lead plaques: Wace 1908–9, 132, 139, 141.
83 Zweig 1999; Calame 2018.
84 Whitley 2021; Fassberg 2023.
85 Whitley 2021.
86 Compare with the discussion of haptic reading in Miller 2025.
87 For the indebtedness of athletic epigrams to heraldic proclamations, see Miller 2024.
88 The bronze discus, now in a private collection, is possibly from the Sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas near Kosmas; see Jeffery 1990, 199, no. 14, and Miller 2025, 76–77.
89 Plant 2024, 351n82.
90 For epigram and performance, see, for example, Day 2010, Lavigne 2018, and Miller 2025.
91 For *androne*s in pre-classical Greek houses and the likely flexibility of the space, see Nevett 2010, 43–62.
92 See Grethlein 2008 and Canevaro 2018.
93 It is possible that the inscription was added at Melosa's death. The loss of a *kore* before marriage was particularly poignant in Greek eyes, and this scenario might explain such a unique inscription.
94 See Bundrick 2015 for the distribution of eye cups. The Recovery of Helen eye cup in Mannheim (see note 52 above) was found at Vulci and measures 29.3 cm in diameter (36.7 cm with the handles).
95 See, for example, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 75.AD.43, a late sixth-century/early fifth-century terracotta mold for such a figure.
96 Foxhall 2012, 183, and passim.
97 See, for example, Plant 2024, 336, 346.

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ABBREVIATION

BAPD Beazley Archive Pottery Database (https://www.carc.ox.ac.uk/carc/pottery).

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A Florentine Tabernacle by Nanni di Bartolo and Giovanni di Francesco Toscani

BEATRICE ROSA

In 1908, The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired an extraordinary Florentine tabernacle from the collection of the Berlin art historian and curator Wilhelm von Bode (fig. 1).[1] Typologically speaking, the tabernacle is a *colmo da camera*: a small aedicule containing an image, painted or sculpted, of the Madonna and Child. Inventories show that *colmi* were common in early fifteenth-century Florence, often installed in the bedrooms of palaces where they functioned as a focal point for daily prayer and devotion.[2] The Met's *colmo* has never been studied at length, but it is of exceptional quality and historical interest as the result of a collaboration between two of the most important artists of the period: sculptor Nanni di Bartolo and painter Giovanni di Francesco Toscani.

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fig. 1 Nanni di Bartolo (called Il Rosso) (Italian, ca. 1395–after 1435) and Giovanni di Francesco Toscani (Italian, ca. 1372–1430). *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1415–20. Terracotta, polychromed and gilded, H. 42 in. (106.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1908 (08.22.4). Before conservation

fig. 2 Nanni di Banco (from) (Italian, documented 1405–d. 1421). *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1410–15. Plaster, polychromed, 34½ × 28½ in. (87.6 × 72.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1916 (18.70.19). Before conservation

TERRACOTTA AND THE PRODUCTION OF *COLMI* IN EARLY RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

Before turning to The Met's tabernacle, it is useful to discuss the evolution of terracotta as a medium for domestic devotional images. Terracotta sculpture experienced a resurgence in early fifteenth-century Florence, achieving a popularity that continued uninterrupted until the mid-sixteenth century. The origins of the technique are unknown, as are the reasons for its renewed favor, but the latter has convincingly been explained as the result of a widespread desire in the period to emulate ancient cultures. Pliny the Elder speaks extensively about clay modeling in *Naturalis Historia*, and the technique was famously valued by the Romans and earlier by the Etruscans. Its creative potential was nevertheless sidelined in the Middle Ages, when clay was used not for figurative sculptures but exclusively as a building material or for utilitarian domestic objects.[3] Given its extensive use and appreciation by ancient cultures, it is not surprising that the technique was revitalized in Renaissance Florence, during the height of Humanism and the enthusiastic rediscovery of antiquity.[4]

The revival of terracotta as a sculptural medium coincided with a surge in the production of small-scale images for personal devotion. Intended for display in the home, the sculptures were often characterized by a pronounced naturalism that heightened the tone of familial intimacy.[5] The most common subjects were half-length images of the Madonna and Child, made by the cast technique by which the sculptor modeled a prototype in clay and, after firing it, applied a layer of plaster to the surface to obtain a negative form that could be used as a mold to produce a large number of variants.[6] The low cost of the materials involved and the industrial nature of this enterprise—akin to mass production—ensured the success of the genre and the wide desirability of the reliefs on the open market. It also secured the diffusion to a vast public of celebrated compositions by major sculptors such as Donatello, Jacopo della Quercia, Desiderio da Settignano, and Antonio Rossellino.[7] In terms of patronage, the objects could have been commissioned directly, but they might also have been produced in workshops and then sold to prospective buyers. The purchasers could then request that the artist customize the image by adding their coats of arms or family emblems to the base or frame of the finished product. It is unclear, however, whether the transaction took place in the workshop of the sculptor or of the painter.[8]

The Met holds several early fifteenth-century Florentine *Madonna*s made by cast. Two are currently catalogued as "after a composition sometimes attributed to Lorenzo Ghiberti" and correspond to a compositional type called the Madonna di Fiesole.[9] Known today from around sixty replicas, the type traditionally had been associated with Ghiberti, but after the rediscovery of the prototype in 2006, it was rightly attributed to Nanni di Banco, one of the great Florentine Renaissance sculptors alongside Ghiberti, Donatello, and Brunelleschi.[10] One of the works in The Met is of dubious age. The other is made of plaster and displays high-quality, well-preserved modeling and original polychromy, although some parts have been restored (for example, the coats of arms on the base have been effaced) (fig. 2).[11] A third *colmo* at The Met belongs to a different, so-called serial composition, one seldom considered by critics but known through dozens of examples, none of which are of sufficient quality to be considered the prototype.[12] The work in The Met is nevertheless of good quality, but the polychromy is mostly modern and the two coats of arms on the base flanking

fig. 3 Unknown Florentine sculptor. *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1405–15. Plaster, polychromed, H. 28 in. (71.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1908 (08.22.3). Before conservation

fig. 4 Michele da Firenze (active 1403–ca. 1453). *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1410–20. Terracotta, polychromed, 52¼ × 26 in. (132.7 × 66 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1916 (16.154.9). Before conservation

an invocation to the Virgin have been regilded and are now invisible (fig. 3).[13]

Particularly prolific in the production of *colmi da camera* was Michele da Firenze, a Florentine sculptor who worked initially in his hometown before moving north to work in the Veneto, Emilia, and Lombardy. Throughout his career, Michele made many *colmi* of the Madonna and Child, often with the figures enclosed in elegant frames decorated with plant motifs and cherubs. Unusually, he modeled the figures and the entire frame in clay. Michele also tended to represent his figures at full-length, a notable departure from the other Tuscans of his generation who maintained the half-length format.[14] The Met also holds a *colmo* by Michele that remarkably retains its original polychromy (fig. 4).[15] The Madonna is regally depicted with her hair pinned up and wearing a sumptuous gown that falls in abundant, looping folds. She holds the Christ Child in her arms as he somewhat awkwardly examines the globe held in his right hand while resting the other hand pensively on his hip. The figures are contained within an elaborate frame of two Corinthian columns supporting a pointed arch and decorated with foliate elements and a central cherub's head. Two small angels stand at the sprig of the arch supporting a heavy cloth of honor behind the two protagonists. As one of Michele da Firenze's exceptionally rare *colmi* to retain its original polychromy and gilding, this work provides an important indication of how these objects appeared when they left his workshop.[16]

THE MET *COLMO*

The *colmo* acquired by The Met in 1908 (fig. 1) constitutes a more ambitious and costly alternative to the standard type described above.[17] The examples presented so far (except that of Michele da Firenze) were produced

entirely from casts for both the figurative parts and the bases. In this case, however, the terracotta figures of the *Madonna and Child* were modeled in clay directly by the artist—without the use of a matrix, and without a base that would have let the sculpture stand on its own. The sculpture was meant to be contained in the wooden tabernacle that we see today, which would have hung on the wall of a bedroom.[18] The frame retains its original gilding and painted surface, except for a missing element that once decorated the center of the cymatium. It is clear that the angels were facing a now-lost component, most likely a head of God the Father conceived as part of the original design, perhaps modeled in stucco and applied directly onto the mounting. At the base of the tabernacle are two coats of arms: on the left is a rampant lion on a silver background, and on the right are two silver six-pointed stars on a gold and silver background. Both are curiously topped by an imperial eagle with black plumage, outstretched wings, and a crown on its head, suggesting a marriage between two families linked to the Holy Roman Emperor. The blazon on the left—which by custom should be that of the husband—seems to belong to the Tucci or Betti families, while the one on the right corresponds to the Benucci.[19] However, the precise connection between the two families, as well as the nature of their imperial affiliation, remains to be determined. Identifying the coats of arms and, by extension, the marriage that united the families would provide a crucial means of dating the tabernacle. All in all, however, this is an exceptionally well-preserved and integral *colmo da camera*.

Comparable objects include only the so-called Ingham Madonna in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, which has lost its polychromy and original tabernacle, and a polychrome plaster cast of it in the Acton Collection, Florence (fig. 5).[20] The latter is currently set in a wooden tabernacle that is not original but still provides a sense of how the work appeared in its original frame and serves as a parallel to the work in The Met.

THE PAINTER

Two of the most striking aspects of The Met's *colmo* are the polychromy and painted decoration on the frame, which, like the sculpture itself, are remarkably well-preserved. The work invites observations about the interaction between the painter and sculptor, a topic rarely investigated in studies of mass-produced domestic *colmi*. The role of the painter was equally important to the sculptor, as his brush enlivened the figures and accentuated the affectionate rapport between mother and son.[21]

At times, the sculptor executed the polychromy himself. This was the case with Michele da Firenze's *Altare delle Statuine* in Modena, which according to a contract of September 6, 1440, Michele painted and gilded.[22] More notably, Antonio Manetti tells us that Brunelleschi "colored with his own hand" his crucifix in Santa Maria Novella.[23] Nevertheless, polychromy was usually subcontracted to a painter's workshop. For the second half of the fifteenth century, we are well informed about this practice owing to the surviving workshop diaries of Neri di Bicci and his pupil Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli.[24] There is less documentation for the early fifteenth century, but the method seems to have been equally common. In 1424, for instance, Bicci di Lorenzo and Andrea di Giusto were paid to pigment Dello Delli's terracotta relief *Coronation of the Virgin* over the portal of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence as well as the *Twelve Apostles* inside the same church.[25] Other such collaborations have been identified by means of visual analysis: Paolo Schiavo has been recognized as the artist who painted the frame of the small tabernacle in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, containing a plaster cast of a plaquette by Donatello.[26] Likewise, the polychromy of a sculpted Madonna on the art

fig. 5 Unknown Florentine sculptor. *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1415–25. Plaster, polychromed, H. 13¾ in. (35 cm). Villa La Pietra, Florence

fig. 6 Detail of tabernacle (fig. 1) showing angel painted by Giovanni di Francesco Toscani

fig. 7 Detail of painting by Giovanni di Francesco Toscani on cassone, before 1420. Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

market has been attributed to Giovanni di Ser Giovanni, known as Lo Scheggia. And a plaster in the Grimaldi Fava Collection is now attributed to a painter working in the style of Masolino da Panicale.[27]

The Met's tabernacle makes it possible to add the name Giovanni di Francesco Toscani (ca. 1372–1430) to this short list of painters who polychromed sculptures in early quattrocento Florence. His contribution to the *colmo* has been recognized since at least 1990 when the work was shown in the *Italian Renaissance Frames* exhibition at The Met as a collaborative effort between Toscani and an "unknown Florentine sculptor."[28] Previously known as the Master of the Griggs Crucifixion (after a painting now in The Met), Toscani first came into view as a distinct artistic personality in 1966. That year, Luciano Bellosi assigned the Griggs Master two fragmentary frescoes in the Ardinghelli chapel at Santa Trinita, Florence, and recognized them as the only surviving parts of a once-extensive chapel decoration commissioned to Giovanni Toscani and his brother Domenico in 1423.[29] In his tax declaration of 1427, Toscani described himself as a *cofanaio*, or painter of chests, and it is on the basis of one of his surviving cassone fronts (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) that the pictorial sections of The Met *colmo* can be attributed to him. By comparing the physiognomies of the angels in the *colmo*'s pinnacle to the figures in the Berlin panel, one can easily discern the same facial features: long noses, eyes delineated with a touch of black for the iris surrounded by a hint of white lead, and cheeks blushed with red. The drapery is also comparable, marked by a creamy consistency to the folds and emphasized by highlighting (figs. 6, 7).

The attribution to Toscani can be further corroborated by the painter's evident contact with the sculptors of his time, something Bellosi intuited when he considered it "curious that instead of the elongated and contracted Gothic manner of Lorenzo Monaco, our painter [Toscani] looked toward Ghiberti, with his softer and richer rhythmic cadences."[30] Bellosi noted in particular the formal similarities between Toscani's *Saints* from San Bartolomeo in Prato and Ghiberti's famous bronze *Saint John the Baptist* on the facade of Orsanmichele.[31] Similarly, in a panel from the predella of Toscani's dismembered Ardinghelli polyptych (now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art), the *Baptism of Christ* on the left has been identified as a copy of Ghiberti's depiction of the same subject on the North Gate of Florence's Baptistery, while the *Decapitation of Saint James Major* on the right has been associated with Niccolò di Pietro Lamberti's sculpted predella for the niche of the Arte dei Vaiai e Pellicciai on the facade of Orsanmichele in Florence.[32] Toscani's attention to contemporary sculpture is further demonstrated by his derivation of the Madonna Orlandini, a Donatellesque sculpture housed today at the Bode-Museum, Berlin.[33] On the other hand, Toscani's activity as a painter of sculpture is virtually unknown, with the only mention of it in the *Italian Renaissance Frames* catalogue, which has been overlooked in all subsequent studies on the

artist.[34] The *colmo* therefore emerges as a key piece of evidence for Toscani's work as a polychromer of sculpture, opening new avenues of investigation for the painter's career.

THE SCULPTOR: NANNI DI BARTOLO

Who was the sculptor with whom Toscani worked? In all previous scholarship, The Met's sculpture has hitherto eluded firm attribution.[35] When Joseph Breck first published it in 1910, he called it the work of an "unknown author," but when he returned to it in 1913, he described it with a bit more precision, as in the manner of the Master of the Pellegrini Chapel.[36] This personality, first isolated by Wilhelm von Bode, is now conclusively identified as Michele da Firenze.[37] Bode's attribution was endorsed by Ludwig Goldscheider, who mentioned the tabernacle in his 1949 list of works by Michele, and it is maintained by the museum today under the Master of the Pellegrini Chapel rubric.[38] Wilhelm Valentiner, in contrast, called the tabernacle "not so impressive," and assigned it and the polychromy to Ghiberti's workshop.[39] However, these attributions can be dismissed, not only because they were made when the sculptors' careers were not well understood, but also because the work is very accomplished from technical and compositional points of view. The hyper-Donatellian Christ Child reaching toward the apple held by his mother outside the boundaries of frame is an especially inventive idea—one that I believe can only have been conceived by a sculptor from Donatello's immediate entourage.

It is proposed here that the sculptor can be identified as Nanni di Bartolo (called Il Rosso).[40] One of the most distinguished sculptors in Donatello's circle, Nanni is first mentioned in 1419, when he was commissioned to create a statue for the facade of Florence Cathedral. In 1421, he completed the statue for the cathedral bell tower that had been left unfinished by Bernardo Ciuffagni, to whom it was commissioned in 1415. The same year Nanni and his probable teacher, Donatello, signed the sculptures of *Abraham and Isaac* executed for the exterior of the cathedral bell tower, and between 1422 and 1423 he independently sculpted a figure of Abdiah for the same location. Another prophet for the bell tower came in December 1422, for which the marble was procured in March 1423. In July that year Nanni was paid for a *doccione* (gargoyle), again for Florence Cathedral. This work was evidently the last that Nanni made for his native city; soon thereafter he fell into debt, which he escaped by moving to Venice, where by early 1424 he had already been resident for several months.[41]

To clarify the attribution to Nanni di Bartolo, it is necessary to reflect on the chronology of his early career. The Met's *colmo* can be dated to this period before his departure for Venice around 1424 and thus contemporaneous with his activity in Florence alongside Donatello. In these beginning years, Nanni was working very much in the shadow of Donatello; only later would he establish the distinctive style that would define his brief career. There are no existing documents that mention him among Donatello's assistants, but surviving works strongly suggest a career that began under the great sculptor's tutelage. Clear confirmation may be found in the *Abraham and Isaac* created by both artists, but it is also evident in the undocumented devotional sculptures that have been attributed to Nanni di Bartolo on the basis of style.[42] Like his master—a protagonist of coroplastic sculpture in early fifteenth-century Florence—Nanni routinely turned to the medium of clay for depictions of Madonna and Child. Many of his earliest works are so close to Donatello that they border on imitation.[43] One such work is the *Madonna and Child on a Faldistorio* in the Bode-Museum, Berlin, recently ascribed to Nanni by Laura Cavazzini, who rightly pointed out its resemblance to Donatello's tabernacle—now in the Museo Civico di Prato—of around 1415–20.[44] The *Madonna Enthroned* at the Krefeld Museum is equally indebted to Donatello and reproposes the drapery patterns of Donatello's marble *Saint John* on the facade of Florence Cathedral. From the tabernacle in Prato the sculpture adopts the following poses: the Christ Child standing on his mother's knees; Jesus resting his left arm on the Madonna's chest; and the complex pose of his legs with the right one folded and the left one outstretched and protected by Mary's hand.[45] Donatello's influence is further prominent in Nanni's *Saint Anthony Abbot* at San Giuseppe in Arezzo, a notable response in terracotta to the master's marble *Saint Mark* at Orsanmichele in Florence.[46]

Nanni's unique interpretation of Donatello's style is evident in The Met's *colmo*. In Donatello's Madonnas, the Christ Child is always presented as agitated and irreverent, often trying to free himself from his mother's arms. Likewise, in The Met's *colmo*, the unsteady Child seems eager to take his first steps toward the fruit proffered by his mother. Donatello's influence is best seen in the head of the Madonna, which admittedly differs from the typical physiognomy of Nanni di Bartolo's later Madonnas. Around the 1420s, Nanni di Bartolo devised a recognizable female type: the Madonnas have somewhat hooked profiles, long necks, and high and rounded foreheads with flourishing hair usually pulled

fig. 8 Detail of tabernacle (fig. 1). Before conservation

fig. 9 Donatello (Florence, ca. 1386–1466). Detail of Volpi Madonna, ca. 1410–12. Glazed terracotta. Location unknown

fig. 10 Detail of tabernacle (fig. 1). Before conservation

fig. 11 Detail of Nanni di Bartolo, *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1420 (fig. 12)

fig. 12 Nanni di Bartolo. *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1420. Terracotta, polychromed, 30⅜ × 16½ in. (77 × 42 cm). Private collection

fig. 13 Detail of tabernacle (fig. 1)

fig. 14 Nanni di Bartolo. *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1421–23, Plaster, polychromed, 25¼ × 16½ in. (64 × 42 cm). Pittas collection, London

back into thin scarves replete with folds.[47] In The Met's work, the Madonna seems a bit younger, with thinner, more delicate and calligraphic features. This is likely the case because Nanni di Bartolo here imitates the head of the so-called Volpi Madonna, attributed to Donatello around 1410–12 (figs. 8, 9).[48] The affinities with the Volpi Madonna are so close that The Met's *colmo* may have been modeled by Nanni di Bartolo at a time when he was still looking to the work of Donatello, especially for the physiognomy of the Madonna, before he had established his individual style. The Child, in contrast, is more characteristic of Nanni and similar to a terracotta in a private collection in which the Child is rendered with the same round skull, ballooned nose, and high forehead (figs. 10, 11).[49] He is similarly playful yet unsteady on his stocky legs (figs. 12, 13).[50] The Madonna's physiognomy reflects Nanni di Bartolo's more typical female type, suggesting a later date than The Met *colmo*, around 1420.[51]

The lunette today in the cloister of the church of Sant'Egidio in Florence represents the transitional period between the making of The Met's terracotta and the one on the art market.[52] As Luciano Bellosi argued, the lunette should be dated before the earliest mention of Nanni in 1419, allowing his style to evolve into that seen in his terracotta masterpiece, the Ognissanti Madonna.[53] That work, depicting large, full-length figures, was added to Nanni di Bartolo's catalogue in 1966.[54] Bellosi rightly emphasized its close relationship with the marble *Abraham* at Florence Cathedral, dating it around 1421. Nanni di Bartolo's first and only serial Madonna composition, known as *Berlin 1562* (after the inventory number it once bore at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum), belongs to the same period. It inventively depicts the Madonna holding the sleeping Child, a rare type that was seldom replicated, and is known from five extant versions.[55] Nanni di Bartolo probably conceived this serial typology before he left Florence for Venice, between 1421 and 1423, perhaps to conform to Florentine trends during the first two decades of the fifteenth century. He later abandoned the production of Madonnas "by cast" when he arrived in the North where this type of work was evidently not already in demand.[56] The sculpture corresponds to Nanni di Bartolo's usual female types, with the high forehead, falconlike nose, and band clasping the hair. He retained this style in Venice, as seen in the *Madonna and Child* over the portal of the basilica of Tolentino (executed in Venice in 1435), the *falsa madre* in the *Judgment of Solomon* at the northwest corner of the Doge's Palace in Venice, and the bystanders at the *Baptism of Christ* on the *Arca del Beato Pacifico* in the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari.[57] Similarities with The Met's *colmo* and the *Berlin 1562* are noticeable, for instance in the way the two Virgins wear a dress ruffled in foam folds that create a V-shape on the chest (figs. 13, 14).

To date, a considerable number of terracotta sculptures have been attributed to Nanni di Bartolo. In several instances, however, his name has been associated with works of uneven quality that do not convincingly reflect his hand and are better understood as products of other, unidentified sculptors active within his

fig. 15 Unknown Tuscan sculptor (circle of Nanni di Bartolo). *Madonna and Child*, 1420–40. Terracotta, polychromed, 35⅝ × 21¼ × 7⅝ in. (90.5 × 54 × 19.5 cm). Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid (08571)

immediate circle. One such example is the standing *Madonna and Child* at the Pieve di Arezzo, initially linked to Nanni by Giancarlo Gentilini and later firmly attributed to him by Alfredo Bellandi.[58] As Aldo Galli has argued, the terracotta should be removed from Nanni's catalogue and instead ascribed to a follower who, in addition to the Arezzo sculpture, may also have produced the half-length *Madonna and Child* emerging from a curious head of lettuce—lost in Berlin during World War II—and the *Madonna and Child* now in the Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid (fig. 15).[59] A comparable case is a terracotta tondo in the Bode-Museum, Berlin. Long associated with Lorenzo Ghiberti or his workshop, it was reassigned in 1998 by Anna Jolly to the circle of Nanni di Bartolo.[60] Despite the damage sustained during the war, the sculpture remains sufficiently legible to allow comparison with a second terracotta preserved in the Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence, which appears to be by the same hand. Together, the works suggest the existence of a small corpus attributable to another sculptor in Nanni di Bartolo's circle.[61]

By contrast, certain works can be securely attributed to Nanni himself. In 2013, Mattia Vinco added to his corpus a *Madonna and Child* known only through a photograph in the Berenson Photo Archive.[62] Typologically, it is closely related to a particularly refined example published by Giancarlo Gentilini in 2007.[63] More contested is the attribution proposed by Ursula Schlegel in 1979 of a graceful standing *Madonna and Child* in the Bode-Museum, Berlin. Her suggestion, largely overlooked at the time, has been revived by Neville Rowley, who argues persuasively in favor of Nanni's authorship.[64]

The artist's name has also been linked to the Madonna of Citerna, a terracotta discovered in the early 2000s in a small town in the province of Perugia.[65] A work of exceptional quality, it was initially attributed to Donatello, but later rightly excluded from his oeuvre and reclassified as having been produced by "an artist close to Donatello and Nanni di Bartolo, c. 1419."[66] While the sculpture reveals strong affinities with Nanni's style, they do not suffice to warrant its inclusion in his catalogue.[67] Nonetheless, the work was undoubtedly made by a sculptor of rare ability. The number of terracotta sculptures associated—rightly or not—with Nanni di Bartolo is substantial and would merit a focused study of its own.[68] What remains beyond doubt is the sculptor's mastery in modeling clay, further evidenced by the various large-scale full-figure sculptures of the Madonna enthroned—a type still relatively uncommon in Florentine sculpture at the beginning of the fifteenth century.[69]

CONCLUSIONS

The Met's *colmo* can be considered a collaborative effort by Nanni di Bartolo and Giovanni Toscani. The terracotta can be ascribed to Nanni at the time he was closest to Donatello, from whom he drew inspiration for the playful relationship between mother and son, as well as the Madonna's distinct physiognomy, derived from the Volpi Madonna. As a response to the Volpi Madonna, the sculpture corroborates the hypothesis that Nanni di Bartolo trained in Donatello's workshop with access to the master's designs. It responds not only to Donatello's publicly accessible works, but also to works intended for personal devotion and therefore inaccessible to artists once they left the bottega. The *colmo* represents a significant collaboration between Nanni and Giovanni Toscani. The date of around 1415–20 proposed here for the terracotta matches the style of Toscani's interventions, which are closest to his cassone panel at the Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen in Berlin, datable no later than 1420.[70] The tunic of the Christ Child aligns with this date, as it reflects a style common in Florence in the first two decades of the fifteenth century. The *frappina* sleeves in particular correspond to Donatello's sculptural models of around 1410–12 (for example, the Volpi Madonna and the Madonna in the Church of San Martino in Pontorme, near Empoli) as well as paintings from as early as 1405–10 (for example, the Madonnas by Gherardo Starnina at the Museo Diocesano in Milan and J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles).[71] Additionally, the architecture of the tabernacle is compatible with this date, as its mixtilinear-shaped gable (a shape that combines straight lines and curves) resonates with Ghiberti's Calimala tabernacle for Orsanmichele of 1415.[72] The work is therefore an important testimony to the rich interrelation between sculptors and painters in early quattrocento Florence, bearing witness to a collaboration between one of the city's rising stars, Nanni di Bartolo, and one of its more seasoned painters, Giovanni di Francesco Toscani.

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NOTES

1 The purchase for The Met was made through Robert W. de Forest. In 1905, Bode and de Forest began collaborating to acquire various "stuccoes and terracottas" for the Museum. The history can be reconstructed through a series of letters preserved in the archives of The Met and the Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, which I plan to present in a forthcoming article.

2 For Florentine Renaissance interiors in general, see Schiaparelli 1983, 134–94; for *colmi* in particular, see ibid., 187–88.

3 See Bellosi 1977; Gentilini 1980; Bellosi 1990; and Bellosi 2002. Luciano Bellosi (1989a, 131) discussed early cases of clay modeling in Piedmont (in northern Italy) and Germany, a subject taken up more recently in Boucher 2001.

4 Bellosi 1989a, 131.

5 Galli 2003, 159.

6 For seriality from a technical point of view, see Gentilini 1996, 97–102. The most common material used for the replicas was plaster.

7 Galli 2003, 159.

8 For example, more than fifty "Madonne di gesso" are mentioned in Neri di Bicci 1976. We know that the painter regularly used ready-made plaster Madonnas from Desiderio da Settignano's workshop, located next to his own in Santa Trinita in Florence (Gentilini 2007a, 36–37; Ciampaglia 2024, 131). There was a similar scenario for Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli—among the artifacts produced in 1475–1500 are five plaster reliefs depicting the Madonna and Child (Ciampaglia 2024, 169–79). We also know that in 1508–11 the painter regularly purchased supplies from an artisan in Empoli (near Florence) who prepared and sent him plaster sculptures made by cast, ready to be painted (Comanducci

2003, 108). Both Neri's and Bernardo's records frequently mention "Madonne di botega" (likely painted plaster reliefs), sold at modest prices to passing clients (Ciampaglia 2024, 144). These sources suggest that by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, sculptors supplied plaster reliefs to painters, who then polychromed and mounted them in tabernacles for sale.

9 See www.metmuseum.org/art/collection for MMA 07.120.3 and 18.70.19.

10 For an initial list of examples, see Gentilini 1989. For the attribution to Nanni di Banco, see Galli 2012 and 2022a.

11 MMA 07.120.3 and 18.70.19. The perfectly modeled surface, unusually devoid of any trace of polychromy or plaster preparation, raises doubts. However, the presumed twentieth-century date of the terracotta can only be confirmed if the back of the sculpture (now in a modern wooden tabernacle) is examined and analyzed by thermoluminescence.

12 MMA 08.22.3. See Neri Lusanna 1986a and Fattorini 2018a.

13 This sculpture, like The Met's tabernacle, was acquired by the Museum in 1908 from Wilhelm von Bode through the mediation of Robert W. de Forest.

14 For Michele da Firenze, see Galli 2016 (with related bibliography). For his production of *colmi*, see also Rosa 2025a. Michele produced only one half-length Madonna for serial production; of the five known examples, three are on the art market, one is at the Museo Davia Bargellini in Bologna, and the last is at Santa Lucia a Terzano, near Bagno a Ripoli (see Gentilini 1990, 28). Michele da Firenze's serial production is the subject of Rosa 2025b.

15 The work was shown in Met exhibitions in 1973 and 1990 (see *Early Renaissance Sculpture* 1973, no. 13, as "Modenese, about 1440," and Newbery, Bisacca, and Kanter 1990, 36–37, no. 6, as "Florence or Veneto, ca. 1430–40"). The Met purchased the tabernacle in 1916 at the sale of Elia Volpi's collection in New York, where it was praised in the catalogue as "the most beautiful existing work of Il Maestro della Cappella Pellegrini" (Volpi sale 1916, lot 713). In addition to The Met's tabernacle, only one other painted *colmo* by Michele da Firenze is known. It was once in the Badia Fiorentina and is now preserved in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence (265 S).

16 John Pope-Hennessy (1964, 68) cited The Met's tabernacle by Michele da Firenze as an important counterpart to two other *colmi* by the artist in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (73-1866 and 7572-1861).

17 The cost of a *colmo da camera* varied according to the size, polychromy, and type of frame (if included). See Comanducci 2003 and Kubersky-Piredda 2003.

18 The Met's terracotta (H. 51 cm, without frame; 132.7 cm with frame) is small compared to the more typical *Madonnas* for private devotion, which average between 75 and 85 cm. In addition to the Ingham Madonna (H. 35 cm), Luca della Robbia also produced small-scale serial sculptures, such as the derivations of the Madonna Corsini (see Cavazzini 2011 and the example in the Bode-Museum, Berlin [1722]), or the rarer type with the Child cradled in Mary's arms of which some plaster replicas are known (one in the Bode-Museum, Berlin [251], two on the art market, and the third in a tabernacle in Via del Corso 49 in Florence). The iconography of this work was taken up by Filippo Lippi in a painting housed in the Fondazione Magnani Rocca in Parma and by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres in a drawing made during his stay in Florence (1820–24); see Gentilini 1992, 47. On the types mentioned here and Luca della Robbia's Madonnas with Child in general, see ibid., 39–81. It is possible that these smaller types were alternatives to the more common half-length Madonnas on decorated bases, and intended for tabernacles or decorated niches.

19 Orsini De Marzo 2005.

20 Victoria and Albert Museum, London, A.7-2003. The Ingham Madonna was presented as a work of the "Ghiberti workshop" in Pope-Hennessy 1980, 66. Anna Jolly (1998, 92) catalogued the type under the same label, mentioning the examples at the Victoria and Albert Museum and Villa La Pietra and noting a third "formerly in the Silten collection that later passed to the Kaiser Friederich Museum in Berlin." This third is, however, the Victoria and Albert relief, which was in the Beckerath and Silten collections before Mr. H. Ingham inherited it and placed it on long-term loan to the London museum. It was formally acquired in the early 2000s as a bequest from Mr. and Mrs. Ingham in gratitude to England for providing them refuge from Nazi Germany (see Williamson 2006, 888, fig. 3). The terracotta was shown in the exhibition *Madonnas and Miracles* (2017, 48). The Acton example appears in an unpublished photograph preserved at the Regio Archivio Fotografico degli Uffizi, which shows it outside of its frame (Cartella RAFC-2600, SCU8, Scu. Fiorentina sec. XV Madonne sculture. Inventario regio archivio: RAFF-20302).

21 Galli 2003, 159.

22 Piccinini 1999, in particular 278.

23 Manetti 2021, 33: "Fecie uno crocifisso di legniame, di grandeza come naturale, di tutto rilievo, e colorì di sua mano, che è in S. Maria Novella."

24 Neri di Bicci 1976 and Ciampaglia 2024. For an overview of the Bicci and Rosselli workshops, see *Maestri e botteghe* 1992, 93 and 104–5. For the economic aspects of the two workshops, see Comanducci 2003 and Kubersky-Piredda 2003. See also note 8 above.

25 For a discussion of the terracottas of Santa Maria Nuova and their polychromy, see Lucidi 2020, 66. The activity of polychroming sculptures was often a generational enterprise. Bicci di Lorenzo, for instance, inherited the practice from his father, the senior Bicci di Lorenzo, who on June 1, 1389, agreed to paint the sculptures ("for the decoration of five figures of white marble"; "pro adornatura quinque figurarum marmi albi") on the facade and bell tower of Florence Cathedral (Poggi 1909, 12). Bicci's son Neri also routinely polychromed sculptures (see previous note), as did Andrea di Giusto's son Giusto d'Andrea, who stated himself as a plaster painter in his 1480s tax declarations (Comanducci 2003, 106). In this case, the matter is made more complex because Giusto d'Andrea was also a pupil of Neri di Bicci, of whom he became—with Cosimo Rosselli—the most expert disciple and later a true collaborator. In 1462, he left Neri's workshop and started his own successful business; in the 1480s, he was the second-richest painter only after his master (Ciampaglia 2024, 126–30).

26 Pouncey 1946; Rowley 2022a.

27 For Lo Scheggia, see Gentilini 1991 and Jolly 1998, 93. For the other painter, see Gentilini 2019.

28 Bisacca and Kanter 1990, 21.

29 Bellosi 1966. See also Bacchi and Mattedi 2022, 86–87, 92, 137n, and 281. Most of the fragments of the polyptych were traced by Luciano Bellosi and Federico Zeri; an old description of the chapel, published by Padoa Rizzo (1982), confirmed the reconstruction. Sbaraglio 2006; De Marchi 2024.

30 "curioso che al gotico stirato e contratto di Lorenzo Monaco il nostro pittore preferisca quello del Ghiberti, più dolce e ricco di cadenze ritmiche"; Bellosi 1966, 54.

31 Ibid., 45.

32 See Middeldorf 1955, 184, and Strehlke 2004.

33 Bode-Museum, Berlin (55). Paul Joannides (1987, 5) first suggested a relationship between the painting and the sculpture and attributed the marble to Donatello. Jolly (1998, 107) instead called the sculpture a derivation of Donatello. An attribution to Michelozzo has more recently been proposed (Hofmann and Rowley 2018). Less convincing, however, is the idea that the pose of the Christ Child in several Madonnas by Toscani—for example, the one at San Donato in Calenzano near Florence—depends on the so-called Madonna della Misericordia, or Berlino 130, one of the most replicated Madonna sculptures of its time (Sbaraglio 2024; for an in-depth look at the serial typology, see Gentilini 1981). Toscani likely drew instead on earlier iconographic sources from the trecento or before. Byzantine icons, known to have circulated in Renaissance Tuscany, were often used as models by both painters and sculptors. Relevant in this context is Günter Passavant (1987), who proposed that Mary's affectionate gestures toward Christ—so evident in the examples discussed—stem from such Byzantine prototypes. Toscani also regularly referenced Giotto; his Madonna at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, for example, is based on Giotto's Goldmann Madonna in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (Bellosi 1966, 47).

34 This was addressed in the 2024 exhibition *Empoli 1424: Masolino e gli albori del Rinascimento*, where, despite repeated emphasis on Toscani's ties to sculpture, the *colmo* at The Met went unmentioned. The catalogue proposed Toscani's two panels of saints at San Michele a Pontorme as the side panels of a triptych centered on a freestanding Madonna and Child by the young Donatello, further suggesting that Toscani painted both the panels and the terracotta (Suppa 2024). While intriguing, the hypothesis is unconvincing, chiefly due to the mismatch in scale between the sculpture and the painted panels. In the absence of documentary support, The Met's *colmo* remains the only securely attributed instance of Toscani painting a sculpture. As for Donatello's polychrome terracottas, it remains unclear whether he painted them himself or relied on external workshops. Giovanni Giura (2011), discussing the chapel of the Beato Gherardo da Villamagna in Santa Croce, Florence, proposed that Bicci di Lorenzo not only frescoed the walls but also painted the Donatello crucifix now in the Bardi Chapel, Florence.

35 Bisacca and Kanter 1990, 21.

36 Breck 1910, 20, and Breck 1913, 12–13. The Met maintains the attribution.

37 Bode 1885; for a summary of these issues, see Galli 1992.

38 Goldscheider 1949, 148–49.

39 Valentiner 1940; Valentiner 1950, 56–57.

40 A tenuous connection with Nanni di Bartolo was proposed in Gentilini 1992, 451n11, where the author, in outlining a corpus of several "problematic Ghibertian Madonnas with Child," also included The Met's tabernacle.

41 For the above information on Nanni and his early work in general, see Bellosi 1989b and Markham Schulz 1997. See also Del Bravo 1961.

42 For the sculptures on the facade and bell tower, see Campigli and Galli 2008 and Caglioti 2022.

43 See Bellosi 1989a, Caglioti et al. 2018, and Caglioti 2020.

44 Cavazzini 2021.

45 The work was acquired in 1901 from Adolf von Beckerath with an attribution to the Master of the Pellegrini Chapel *alias* Michele da Firenze. As Frida Schottmüller (1933b) argued, it is more likely by Nanni di Bartolo. See also Krahn and Lessmann 1987, 20–21, and Jolly 1993.

46 The sculpture was associated with Nanni di Bartolo by Gentilini (1980, 74), and definitively ascribed to him in Galli 2002; the latter returned to the subject in Galli 2008, 211–12, with fundamental observations on the work's dating. Nanni must have modeled this terracotta alongside Donatello, likely when they were engaged in *Abraham and Isaac* for Giotto's Campanile and later the *Abdiah*. For payments made in 1422 and 1423 to the painter Giovanni d'Agnolo di Balduccio for the painting of the tabernacle of St. Anthony, thus establishing a probable *ante quem* for the terracotta, see Salmi 1929, 104.

47 Galli 2002.

48 The Madonna and Child was brought to light by Bode (1921, 53) shortly after it had been acquired by the art dealer Elia Volpi. It was presented as an exceptional early example of glazed terracotta, preceding the work of Luca della Robbia. Today, the sculpture is known only through a black-and-white photograph, as its whereabouts have remained unknown since it was sold at auction in 1934 (Museo di Palazzo Davanzati sale 1934, 27, lot 157, pl. 55). This is also a Madonna and Child made by "cast," of which three replicas are currently known. Despite its significance, this type has received little scholarly attention and its authorship remains debated. Bode attributed it to Ghiberti, though comparisons with early works by Donatello have since emerged (Gentilini 1980, 74). Francesca Maria Bacci (2015) convincingly assigned the prototype to Donatello, dating it to around 1415. More recently, the Madonna Volpi has been reconsidered in a study focused on the earliest glazed sculptures in Florence (see Galli and Rosa 2025).

49 Andrea De Marchi (1992) linked the terracotta *Madonna* in a private collection to Domenico Veneziano's *Madonna Against a Rose-Hedge* (Muzeul Național de Artă, Bucharest), whose physiognomies and the Herculean Child recall Nanni di Bartolo's work. The painting also invites comparison with the *colmo* at The Met, where the Virgin draws an apple away from the Child—much like she pulls a rose from him in Veneziano's panel.

50 Galli 2002. This sculpture was at one point owned by Brummer Galleries in New York and appears in their archive (now in The Met) in an old black-and-white photograph numbered 4757. According to the photograph, the sculpture was "exhibited for years in the Metropolitan Museum of Art." The gallery catalogued the terracotta as by "Jacopo della Quercia, Sienese master." Another note on the verso of the photograph records it as "bought from International Studio Art Corp." on November 4, 1940, for $808. The photograph shows the work with different polychromy, therefore providing evidence of an early cleaning operation.

51 Galli 2002.

52 There is a little-known photograph in the Fototeca Planiscig, Museo Nazionale del Bargello (10012), showing the lunette with its original polychromy intact. A note on the back reads: "Michelozzo / Ospedale di S. Maria Nuova / cortile." The attribution to Michelozzo was proposed in Bode 1895, pl. 172, and then in Venturi 1908, 364, in both cases with the same image mention.

53 Bellosi 1997, 94.

54 Peter Meller, in a lecture at the conference *Donatello e il suo tempo* in September 1966, attributed the Ognissanti Madonna to Nanni di Bartolo, comparing it with the Tolentino Madonna. The lecture remains unpublished. For the Ognissanti, see Galli 2022b (with previous bibliography).

55 The sculpture was lost in 1945; see *Dokumentation der Verluste* 2006, 138, inv. 1562. For an overview of the typology and a list of extant versions, see Fattorini 2018b.

56 The same applies to Michele da Firenze: to date, only one *Madonna and Child* produced using a mold (*calco*) is known from his time in Florence, but he abandoned this type of production after moving to the north. See Rosa 2025b.

57 Bellosi 1997, 84. For the *Arca del Beato Pacifico*, see Murat 2014.

58 Gentilini (1980, 73) expressed his "strong temptation" to attribute the work to the young Nanni di Bartolo (but see, more cautiously, Gentilini 1990). The attribution was revived by Bellandi (1995, 405–6), whereas Galli (1996; 2008, 213) expressed doubt.

59 Galli 2002. For the Berlin work, see Schottmüller 1913, 11; Schottmüller 1933a, 17–18; and *Dokumentation der Verluste* 2006, 138, n. 138.

60 Bode-Museum, Berlin (7164). Jolly 1998, 165–66.

61 The sculpture preserved at the Museo Stefano Bardini has been unjustly overlooked by critics, perhaps because it was erroneously published as a stucco work by the "Bottega di Michele da Firenze" (Neri Lusanna 1986b). The piece is actually a rare example of molded terracotta. Both the sculpture and its provenance from the Compagnia dei Battilani di Firenze will be the focus of a forthcoming study.

62 Vinco pointed out that the work is a "derivation of the same prototype, but of inferior quality" ("Una derivazione dello stesso prototipo, ma di qualità inferiore") to one formerly in Paolo Paolini's collection in Rome. In reality, the two sculptures appear to be the same work in two different states of conservation. When the photographs are viewed side by side, the two works show overlapping conservation defects (Vinco 2013, 108n2).

63 Gentilini 2007b. For the sculpture, see also Caglioti et al. 2018.

64 Bode-Museum, Berlin, 2637. The sculpture was attributed to Nanni di Bartolo in Schlegel 1979, 23–24, though not all critics agreed with this attribution. Bellosi (1997, 96) published the sculpture with the name Nanni di Bartolo followed by a question mark. Schlegel's proposal was reasonably supported in Rowley 2022b.

65 Fratini 2004.

66 Caglioti et al. 2018, 43.

67 The sculpture was brought closer to the manner of Nanni di Bartolo in Rowley 2022b.

68 For example, a *Madonna and Child Enthroned* in the Church of the Natività della Beata Vergine in Pozzonovo, near Padua—formerly attributed to Nanni di Bartolo—has been convincingly reassigned to Giovanni de Fondulis (Civettini 2019; see also the monograph Scansani 2024). Similarly, the authorship of a half-length *Madonna and Child* in the Dresden State Art Collections, recently attributed to Nanni di Bartolo on tenuous grounds, should be reconsidered (Kryza Gersch 2024).

69 At least three such works survive: one, preserved intact, is in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Kunstmuseen Krefeld (see note 44 above); a second, probably modeled during his stay in Venice, is now in the Kulturhistorisches Museum, Magdeburg (Schottmüller 1933b and Jolly 1993); and a third is in the Church of San Luca, Venice (Markham Schulz 2012).

70 Sbaraglio 2019.

71 For the painting, see Jaffé 1997, 121, and Crespi Collection 2000, 80–85. For Gherardo Starnina, see Zappasodi 2017.

72 The exhibition catalogue *Italian Renaissance Frames* described the frame as "probably designed by Brunelleschi's contemporary and rival Lorenzo Ghiberti" (Bisacca and Kanter 1990, 21). Admittedly, it is a form already used in fourteenth-century polyptychs, but Ghiberti's reinvention gave it new momentum and led to its renewed popularity in the city. Coincidentally, Bellosi (1966, 47) likened the frame of Giovanni Toscani's *Madonna* at Calenzano to Ghiberti.

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A Silver Hanukkah Lamp by Gaspare Vanneschi

DAVIDE SPAGNOLETTO

Artistic virtuosity and the evocation of memory are splendidly realized in one of the most remarkable Jewish ritual silver objects in The Metropolitan Museum of Art: an elegant Hanukkah lamp crafted by Gaspare Vanneschi (1718–1787, master 1758), a Florentine silversmith active in Rome (fig. 1). The lamp is a rare surviving example of a sumptuously made work in silver intended for private use by Roman Jews during the Ghetto period (1555–1870). The piece is also particularly useful for reconstructing aspects of Roman Jewish life and for drawing attention to the Baraffaels, an influential Jewish family in the city. In addition, the lamp provides further insight into the decorative arts of eighteenth-century Rome, largely characterized by a balanced reinterpretation of the Baroque style.

fig. 1 Gaspare Vanneschi (Italian, 1718–1787). Hanukkah lamp, 1773–74. Silver, embossed, engraved, punched; soft wood back support, 16⅝ × 11⅝ × 3¾ in. (42 × 29.4 × 9.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Acquisitions Fund, Friends of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Gifts, Renée E. and Robert A. Belfer, Leon D. and Debra R. Black, Betsy and Ed Cohen/Arete, Mark Fisch and Rachel Davidson, Álvaro Saieh Bendeck, Ruth and Andrew Suzman, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee, and Merryl H. and James S. Tisch Gifts, 2018 (2018.89)

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The Baraffael lamp was used during the Jewish festival of Hanukkah to commemorate the victory of the Maccabees, a Hasmonean family, over the Seleucid Greek army around 164 BCE, and the rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. The lamp is composed of nine cups containing the oil and wicks, eight of which were aligned and lit progressively on each day of the feast; the ninth, the *Shammash* (Hebrew for "helper" or "servant"), here placed at the upper left, was used to light the others. In the center, the action of lighting the lamp for eight consecutive nights is prominently represented by the large nine-branched candelabrum, one branch for each night and a ninth in the middle for the *Shammash*. Above, an arch frames a double-fringed shell containing a ewer and three bees (originally four) along with a cartouche with ornamental scrollwork at the top, featuring a naturalistic rooster holding a stalk of wheat in its beak.

Though there are no inscriptions, the lamp has been traced to a specific patron: Giuseppe Vita (Iosef Chai) Baraffael, one of the few wealthy inhabitants of the Ghetto in Rome during the eighteenth century.[1] Three pieces of evidence make this connection: the family symbol of the rooster in the central cartouche; the bees, interpreted as an homage to Devora ("bee" in Hebrew), the patron's deceased wife; and the fact that Baraffael was Vanneschi's most important patron.[2] This article examines the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp within its social, religious, and artistic contexts and relates it to other eighteenth-century ceremonial objects. An analysis of its components associates the lamp with concurrent trends in Roman metalsmithing and architecture, thus demonstrating that Jewish silver ritual ornaments are an essential part of the broader sacred and secular silver produced in Rome.[3] Since Jews were prohibited from working with silver, every Jewish object was not only the result of a liturgical necessity, but also of a negotiation between a patron and an artist whose decorative and artistic models derived from secular or Christian milieus.

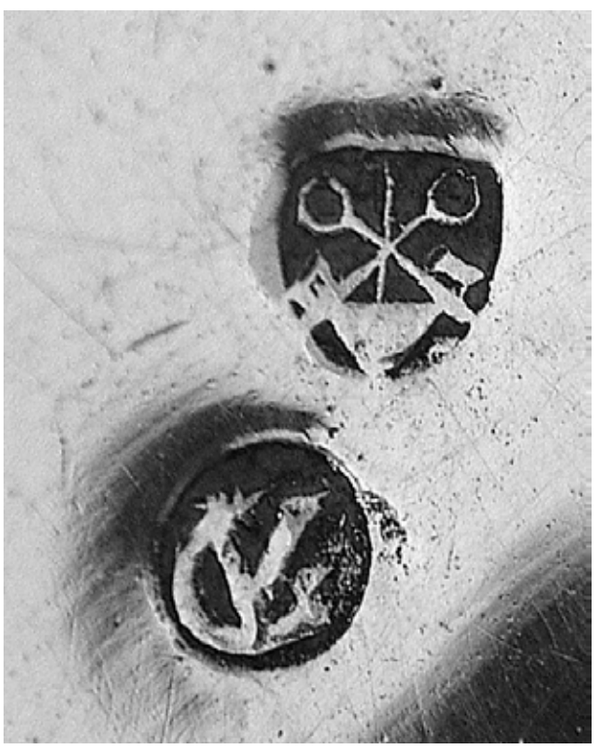

fig. 2 Detail of marks on the Hanukkah lamp (fig. 1)

ROMAN JEWISH SILVERWORK

The extensive loss of all silverwork, even that belonging to Christian and Roman noble families, makes the survival of the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp all the more remarkable. Since such pieces were frequently melted down to accommodate changes in taste or for the intrinsic value of the metal, they are typically only known through documents. Indeed, for example, in the case of the majority of the sacred and secular silverwork belonging to the noble Roman Barberini family, only the original design drawings have survived.[4] Much of the silverwork in the Papal States disappeared with the arrival of French troops following the Treaty of Tolentino (1797) when Pope Pius VI Braschi was obliged to pay the war indemnity to Napoleon by minting coins with requisitioned metal.[5] The silver kept in noble residences, churches, and to a lesser extent synagogues was melted down. To fully appreciate the splendor and quality of Roman production, it is necessary to track down pieces held outside the Papal States, such as the sacred furnishings commissioned by John V of Portugal for the Chapel of St. John the Baptist in the church of São Roque in Lisbon, or the ritual objects of the Rome synagogues within the Ghetto gates.[6] The Baraffael Hanukkah lamp not only survived the French invasion, but also the requisitions made during the Nazi occupation of Rome between 1943 and 1944, which did not spare many private assets. The entire library of the Jewish community was stolen.[7]

Having remained in a private collection for about two centuries, the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp returned to the attention of scholars after World War II as renewed interest in Roman silverwork was awakened by the research of jeweler Costantino Bulgari, a leading scholar and collector in the mid-1940s. The son of Sotirios Voulgaris, the Greek founder of the Bulgari company, he financed and led the classification of makers' and assay marks, rendering it possible to reconstruct the activity of silversmiths working in the Papal City and its territories. Bulgari's studies allow us to

fig. 3 Interior of Scola Nuova, Rome. Albumen print, 1883. Museo di Roma, Archivio Iconografico, Rome (AF-3196)

attribute and date the lamp with certainty using its two different marks (fig. 2). The maker's mark with the intertwined initials "GV" is that of silversmith Gaspare Vanneschi (1718–1787, master 1758). The assay mark featuring the *umbraculum* and crossed papal keys—used with variants since 1608—dates it to between 1773 and 1775.[8] Given the dating, the lamp may be considered Vanneschi's final work before an illness that appears to have prevented him from accepting further commissions.[9] The lamp and other work by Vanneschi was displayed for the first time in March 1959 alongside other previously unpublished Jewish objects at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome in one of the most comprehensive exhibitions dedicated to the arts of the eighteenth century in the Eternal City, *Il Settecento a Roma*.[10]

OPULENT SYNAGOGUES IN THE GHETTO

The Baraffael Hanukkah lamp, like certain other ceremonial objects from the Ghetto, is remarkable for its artistry and for the difficult historical circumstances in which it was created. From 1555 onward, Pope Paul IV Carafa and his successors segregated the Jews of Rome in a part of the city known as the Ghetto. For more than three centuries, until Jewish emancipation following the unification of the Kingdom of Italy in 1870, thousands of people lived with numerous restrictions on their freedom. Built on the bank of the Tiber River and enclosed by gates, the Ghetto was an overcrowded and often unsanitary site.[11]

In 1555, the papal bull *Cum nimis absudurm* established that each ghetto in the Papal States should have only one place of prayer. This edict was a challenge for Rome's Jewish community, which was composed of different groups: Jews who had arrived during the ancient Roman period; those who had been expelled from Spain, Sicily, and Sardinia in 1492; and those who had been forced to leave the Kingdom of Naples after 1540.[12] In order to preserve these diverse traditions, the only available building was divided into five synagogues for prayer and study (Cinque Scole), one for each rite observed by the Jews residing in Rome.[13] For centuries, the Scole received donations from the Jewish families who embellished their synagogues with textiles and silverwork to commemorate life events such as marriages, births, and bereavements. Sumptuous ornaments offered respite from the wretchedness of daily life while providing opportunities to express artistic taste (fig. 3).

Following the institution of the Ghetto, Jews were excluded from arts production, although women managed to embroider beautiful synagogue textiles using secondhand fabrics.[14] Jews were also forbidden from entering guilds, so Jewish families needed to employ Christian silversmiths.[15] Travelers who passed through Rome in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries observed the contrast between the widespread poverty of the Jewish population and the richness of the synagogues. In 1724 during his Grand Tour of Europe, Levi ben Menahem Tall visited the Scola Catalana, noting, "There is so much silver, and all the objects are inscribed with the words, written in Hebrew, 'Consecrated to the Lord.'"[16]

How do we justify this opulence? Roman Jews were required to pay numerous taxes to the pope, including, from 1613, one heavily levied on gold and silver objects.[17] Since taxes were not imposed on precious artifacts that were the property of the Scole, there was strong incentive for regulations easing ownership transition of these items to the synagogues. This new practice of donations replaced the previous custom of keeping ritual objects at home and taking them to the synagogue for public prayers.[18] Gifts were also a way to show economic and social status given that the

fig. 4 Wax seal on Giuseppe Vita Baraffael's testament, 1774. Archivio di Stato di Roma, Trenta notai capitolini, Officio 20 (notary Bartholomeus Taschini)

prammatiche, sumptuary laws issued by the Ghetto administrators, restricted the display of individual wealth in daily life.[19] Excluding tableware and small pieces of jewelry, only affluent people who could afford the tax on material goods would keep a few ritual silver ornaments in their homes. They primarily preferred spice containers, *mahzorim* (prayer book covers), and *shaddai* (amulets) for newborns, as they could be used frequently throughout the year. Giuseppe Vita Baraffael, on the other hand, chose a Hanukkah lamp made for a seasonal festival that brought the family together for eight days. Baraffael, who had no direct heirs, lived with his brothers and their children in the same dwelling, suggesting that they celebrated the holidays jointly.[20] His wealth and closeness with his family may be gleaned from his will and testament, opened on January 29, 1775, following his death in December 1774.[21] The document narrows down the execution of the Hanukkah lamp to between 1773 and and the end of the following year. The testament was closed with a wax seal bearing Baraffael's intertwined initials, probably made with a ring or stamp, which was rare for Roman Jews (fig. 4).[22] Moreover, the will and testament record Baraffael's collection of Hebrew books and "worked silver objects" kept in his home that he left to his nephews and niece along with other possessions.[23]

BARAFFAEL FAMILY COLLECTION

The Baraffaels were a prosperous family in the Rome Ghetto. They dealt in spices imported from Holland, England, and France, as well as textiles in joint ventures with merchants in the major Italian ports.[24] After Pope Innocent XI Odescalchi closed the Jewish lending banks in 1682, only a few merchant families managed to diversify their business and retain their affluence. Through tax revenue they managed to sustain the Jewish community, which for the most part engaged in modest work such as the production of small handcrafted items in wood and leather, button making, and tailoring.[25] Some Jews had turned the aforementioned ban on artistic practices into an opportunity to sell fabrics and rent out furniture.[26] Thus the commerce of used textiles was converted into the more profitable business of renting and selling luxury goods and antiques, even to furnish entire princely apartments.[27] The Baraffaels had moved from Ancona to Rome before the eighteenth century and owned a warehouse (*fondaco*) just outside the gates of the Ghetto. There is evidence of payment orders made by the eminent non-Jewish, Roman Ruspoli family to Giacobbe and Zecaria Baraffael, respectively the father and brother of Giuseppe Vita. Between 1714 and 1715, they were commissioned to supply crimson damask and taffeta to decorate the paintings room in Francesco Maria Ruspoli's aristocratic apartment in the family palazzo on Via del Corso in Rome.[28]

The Baraffaels thus frequented the Roman art market, and Giuseppe Vita also held expert knowledge of the merchandise that entered the ports of Civitavecchia and Livorno, where he likely obtained the coral branches that he gave to silversmiths to transform into synagogue objects. In particular, he had commissioned from an unknown silversmith and later from Bernardino Birelli (1707–1767, master 1733) two Torah pointers in coral fashioned in a contemporary style, but based on the natural forms of the material (fig. 5).[29] The patrons of the pointers, like those of other ritual objects, are known today owing to inscriptions with donors' names, as well as family symbols, mostly crests embroidered on fabrics or engraved on silver.

The Baraffael Hanukkah lamp, an object for private use, conveys its meanings through the symbols of the rooster for the patron's surname and the bees for his late wife's Hebrew name (Devora). This is the only known example of such features on a lamp, as the double crest was typically used to mark the merging of two families, appearing in paint on *ketubbot* (marriage contracts) or on the silver covers of *mahzorim* (prayer books), as seen on the book binding (1755–57) by Giuseppe Merlini (1708–1760, master 1746) in The Met.[30]

Jewish heraldry was not meant to convey nobility, but rather to identify families who gave gifts to be placed on public display.[31] Family symbols combined animals, palm branches, ears of wheat, and the

fig. 5 Torah pointer with the coat of arms of the Baraffael family, 1754. Rome, Italy. Silver, engraved and gilt; coral, L. 13¾ in. (35 cm). The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (B51.01.0125)

fig. 6 Detail of Baraffael Mappah. Rome, 1708–9. Embroidered satin with gold thread, with satin and brocade, 22 7/16 × 87⅜ in. (57 × 222 cm). Jewish Museum of Rome (599 B)

menorah. Sometimes further meanings are conveyed, as in the case of the Baraffael family rooster, which probably alluded to the ability to distinguish day from night and, consequently, between good and evil, in reference to a blessing in the morning prayer. The Baraffael symbol first appeared in Rome on a *Mappah* (Torah wrapper) donated by Giuseppe Vita's father to the Scola Nuova in 1708–9 (fig. 6). There, the rooster is embroidered in gold on a green ground against a blue background within a cartouche, a design that remained consistent in other ritual objects and in the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp. However, on the lamp the animal suggests a sense of motion, almost as if it were climbing onto the cartouche (fig. 7). Other variations are found on the crown for the Sefer Torah from 1717–18, donated by the Baraffael family, and completed in 1727 with a pair of Torah finials made on the occasion of Giuseppe Vita's marriage to Devora Modena (fig. 8).[32] The finials and crown bear the crest with the rooster, both chased on the surface and standing at the top in the form of small sculptures, showing that these elements often shape the structure of the objects. The Baraffael Torah finials were crafted by the silversmith Lorenzo Merlini (ca. 1670–1745, master 1719), a sculptor who had worked for Cosimo III de' Medici.[33]

Baraffael also made donations intended to connect the objects to the architecture of the Scola Nuova, the synagogue he attended, contributing to the creation of

a theatrical synagogue ensemble. They include two ornamented beams and a marble wall plaque installed in the synagogue.[34] Moreover, there were three damask hangings with "cartouches in turquoise amoer [moella silk] embroidered with gold letters."[35] Of the three fabrics decorating the arches behind the bimah (the rostrum for the officiant) of the synagogue, only the central one remains, bearing the beginning of a dedication that expresses his wish to donate the silk textiles "for the day of his journey to protect his peace and his death." From the inscriptions on the other two parts, found in the archive of the Scola Nuova, we can decipher the Hebrew year of the donation as 5521 (1760–61) and the patron's concern with being remembered together with his wife, Devora, after their deaths.[36]

In light of these facts, the biblical quote from Isaiah (56:5) chosen by Baraffael to decorate one of the lost curtains of the Scola Nuova, takes on new meaning:

> ונתתי להם בבית ובחומתי יד ושם טוב מבנים ומבנות שם עולם אתן לו אשר לא יכרת
>
> (I will give them, in My House. And within My walls, A monument and a name Better than sons or daughters. I will give them an everlasting name That shall not perish.)

Like the furnishings he donated to the synagogue, the Hanukkah lamp tells the owner's story and conveys his desire to be commemorated by future generations. Baraffael's Jewish spirit is perhaps reflected in the choice of entrusting his legacy not to precious objects as such, but to their ceremonial use on festive days. In this sense the light emanated by the Hanukkah lamp symbolically brightens the darkness of oblivion.

MODELS FOR THE BARAFFAEL HANUKKAH LAMP

Roman silversmithing reached the height of its splendor in the eighteenth century due to two factors: the greater quantity of gold and silver available on the European market, supplied by the mines of Spanish colonial Mexico, and the rejuvenation of the arts during the Baroque period.

The use of curved lines and dynamic forms in the decorative arts reflects an indebtedness to the architectural style that reshaped the face of Rome, particularly to the complex buildings and monuments envisioned in the seventeenth century by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini, which profoundly influenced the silverwork of the following century. Stylistic elements such as scrolls and spiral lines from the facades of Borromini's churches, along with the renewed interest in the Solomonic columns of Bernini's Baldacchino in

fig. 7 Detail of the Baraffael crest on the Hanukkah lamp (fig. 1)

fig. 8 Torah finials: Lorenzo Merlini (Italian, ca. 1670–1745), 1727. Silver, embossed, chased, burin engraved, cast, reworked with chisel, parcel-gilt, 20⅜ × 7⅛ in. (51.7 × 18 cm). Jewish Museum of Rome (MER 56). Torah crown: Rome, 1717–18 (band). Early 19th century (fastigium). Silver, embossed, chased, burin engraved, parcel-gilt, 8 × 8⅛ in. (20.4 × 22.5 cm). Jewish Museum of Rome (MER 57)

St. Peter's Basilica, were transposed into the decorative arts while preserving the symmetry and elegance characteristic of Roman production.

The design of the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp incorporates some of the decorative elements of Roman fountains. The impact is also evident in secular silver items, such as a now-lost saltcellar (table fountain) created for Benedetto Pamphilj in 1679 by Giovanni Giardini, one of the leading artists of the period.[37] The lamp's design scheme as a niche or fountain with shell motif recalls Roman architecture from multiple centuries, but they are reinterpreted by the silversmith according to a Baroque taste. Niches with these elements can be found in designs by Bartolomeo Ammannati for the courtyard of Palazzo Firenze designed after 1552, and in the now-destroyed fountain in the Cortile del Belvedere in the Vatican, which featured the Borghese family coat of arms of Pope Paul V and is known through an etching by Domenico Parasacchi (fig. 9).[38] In 1644, Bernini sculpted for Pope Urban VIII Barberini a corner fountain composed of a double shell in which the Barberini coat of arms with bees was incorporated.[39] A handwashing fountain, installed in the Scola Castigliana and sculpted a century before the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp, serves as a further point of comparison (fig. 10).

The compositional and ornamental solutions were partly inspired by the compendiums that circulated in the workshops of Roman silversmiths.[40] The engravings *Nuove Inventioni d'ornamenti* (1698; *New Inventions of Ornaments*) by Filippo Passarini and *Disegni Diversi* (1714; *Various Drawings*) by Giardini, republished in 1750 under the more explicit title *Promptuarium artis argentiae* (*Compendium of the Art of Silversmithing*), served as references for silversmiths, so much so that the lamp features the same surrounding border with opposing scrolls as a drawing in an oval silver dish attributed to Giardini and now in The Met.[41] Workshops also exchanged prints, leading to the repeated use of traditional elements, sometimes resulting in serially produced pieces. However, they could not always be applied to Jewish objects, and new solutions had to be invented.

The restrictions are especially apparent in the case of an artist like Vanneschi, as the only surviving objects are those he created for Jewish patrons. Vanneschi was a Florentine silversmith listed as working in Rome in 1747 before obtaining his license in 1758.[42] He was one of the last eighteenth-century artists to move from Florence to Rome in search of opportunities that his hometown, then in decline, did not offer.[43] There is no evidence of works by Vanneschi prior to his meeting with Baraffael. In fact, there is no record of an object commissioned from him for the Sacro Palazzo Apostolico or even for Rome's aristocratic families. In his declarations to the University of Goldsmiths in Rome in 1771, Vanneschi

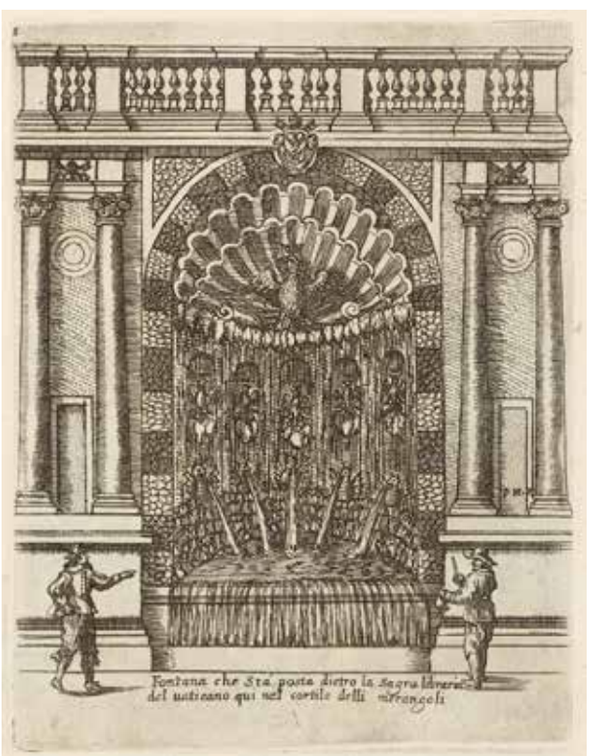

fig. 9 Domenico Parasacchi (Italian, active ca. 1618–30). *Raccolta delle Principali Fontane dell'Inclitta Città di Roma dessegnate et intagliate da Domenico Parasacchi con la nova agiunta dis.e da Girolamo Felice Romano et intagliate da Pietro Miotte Borg.ne*, after 1651. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Herbert Mitchell, 2008 (2018.839.68)

fig. 10 Fountain previously installed in Scola Castigliana and now in the Great Synagogue, Rome, 17th century. Marble. Jewish Museum of Rome

fig. 11 Back of the Hanukkah lamp (fig. 1)

fig. 12 Hanukkah lamp. Rome, 1681–82. Brass plate, embossed, chased, engraved, cast, reworked with chisel, 22 × 15 15/16 × 3 15/16 in. (56 × 40.5 × 10 cm). Jewish Museum of Rome (227)

stated that he was in such financial straits that he could not pay his membership fee up to that point.[44] It is difficult to imagine that Baraffael, a connoisseur of the antiques market, would approach a silversmith without having assessed his earlier works. It is unlikely that the magnificent chandelier commissioned by Baraffael in 1759–60 for the Scola Nuova could be Vanneschi's first creation, especially considering its large dimensions, multipart structure, and the sinuous branches surmounted by three roosters.[45] The artist may have previously assisted another silversmith, one who supervised the workshop's production and merely punched his mark on the finished pieces. Such a practice was common, as various skilled artisans collaborated in the silversmiths' ateliers, specializing in certain designs and techniques.[46] It is therefore probable that different craftsmen worked on the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp. Its wooden support, for example, points to the contribution of a cabinetmaker or carpenter who would have outlined the shape and prevented the silver sheet from breaking during production. The raised parts of the Baraffael lamp, such as the embossed Hanukkah menorah, rooster, and ewer, are separate pieces attached with pins passing through the silver surface and the wood, and are secured at the back with square nuts (fig. 11).

In addition to the technical skills of the silversmith and his possible collaborators, the final form of the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp can be seen as balancing the application of known models and the taste and liturgical needs of the patron. It is likely that when Baraffael commissioned the lamp, he provided the silversmith with the symbolism to guide in the design. Given that Christians were able to freely enter synagogues before 1775, the silversmiths who worked for the Jewish community presumably had seen firsthand the ritual objects in the Scole.[47] The lamp is designed to be hung on a wall, and its overall structure is based on a typical Roman model consisting of an arch resting on two columns, similar to brass Hanukkah lamps from the second half of the seventeenth century. In particular, it draws inspiration from a lamp dated 1681–82 (fig. 12).[48] The columns of the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp do not reference classical orders or the Solomonic model of the Temple of Jerusalem; instead, they are composed of a series of balusters placed one on top of the other like those of certain Torah pointers made in Rome in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

In addition to the 1681–82 brass lamp, the patron could have shown Vanneschi a Hanukkah lamp made for the Scola Nuova in 1762–63 by Pietro Zappati (1720–1781, master 1759), who came from a family of silversmiths and foundrymen and received many commissions from John V of Portugal (fig. 13). It is also possible that Zappati and Vanneschi drew on Christian objects as models. These may have included certain types of pax (*tabella pacis*), devotional tablets that had

fig. 13 Pietro Zappati (Italian, 1720–1781). Hanukkah lamp, 1762–63. Silver, embossed, chased, burin engraved, granulated ground, parcel-gilt, 27⅝ × 25⅝ × 5½ in. (70 × 65 × 14 cm). Jewish Museum of Rome (284)

fig. 14 Gaspare Vanneschi. Mieli Mahzor, 1771–73. Silver, embossed, chased, burin engraved, cast, reworked with chisel, 6¹³⁄₁₆ × 5 × 1½ in. (17.3 × 12.9 × 3.9 cm). Jewish Museum of Rome (150/1)

been used in the liturgy since the Middle Ages, or holy-water stoups like the one made by Giardini (ca. 1702) in The Met.[49] Both the Jewish and Christian models are characterized by an embossed image in the center (in the case of the former it is a menorah in its traditional branched form), at times accompanied by an arm pouring oil from a jar to light it.[50] In the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp, Vanneschi placed the chiseled form of the Hanukkah menorah on a plain surface to accentuate the chiaroscuro of the decoration and of the raised repoussé, thus anticipating the smooth surfaces of the Neoclassical style from the late eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth century. There is also a reference to textiles in the faux valance along the base of the architrave, a solution previously adopted in the chapel of the Basilica della Santissima Annunziata in Florence in 1624.[51] The more direct citation, however, is to the trimmings of synagogue fabrics, thus indicating the connection between textiles and silver objects that Vanneschi had used in a work during those years. Shortly before receiving the commission for the Hanukkah lamp, the silversmith had also been engaged by the Jewish Mieli family (*mieli* means "honey" in Italian), creating a pair of book bindings featuring a central crest with three bees flying above a barrel of honey. Those elements were likely sources of inspiration for the Baraffael Hanukkah lamp, along with the depiction of ruffled fabric that follows the curve of the upper scrolls (fig. 14).

Jewish ritual objects and the architectural elements of the Scole in the Ghetto were designed in relation to Roman artistic styles. This aspect had been noted in the nineteenth century when German historian Ferdinand Adolf Gregorovius observed that "the architecture most used in Rome [had] entered" the Scole, alternating with Jewish symbols, and that on the bimah displayed "the Temple furnishings all in silver, with a beautiful shape, almost as if they were meant to serve as ornamentation for the Pentateuch."[52]

CONCLUSION

The Baraffael Hanukkah lamp represents the taste, style, and technique of silverwork from the Jewish Ghetto in Rome during the late eighteenth century. Related works of art and documents help situate the lamp within the restrictive milieu while gaining a

sense of Baraffael's patronage practices, adapted from those of the nobility. He established a dialogue with Vanneschi and guided him in the design of the lamp by suggesting the use of familial and personal symbols. Thus, although the Rome Ghetto was separated from the rest of the city, the commissioning of liturgical ornaments allowed for unexpected exchanges inside and outside the enclosure. It is evident that between 1773 and 1774, Vanneschi adapted models from Roman workshops for Jewish patrons and incorporated specific requests. Unlike much of the Christian and secular silverware, they were not mass-produced. Some stylistic and architectural models used in Papal Rome were applied to Jewish decorative elements, while Christian silversmiths who had access to the Scole became familiar with Jewish traditions and created new compositions. The Baraffael Hanukkah lamp demonstrates that Roman Jewish ritual silver objects are best understood within a broad context, extending well beyond the confines of the Ghetto, and reflecting the splendor of the arts in Rome.

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NOTES

1 Iosef Chai is the Hebrew transliteration that sometimes appears in the documentation.
2 Di Castro 2011, 212.
3 For an introduction to Italian Jewish ceremonial art, see Liscia Bemporad 1989. On Roman Jewish silverware and textiles, see Pitigliani [1964]; *Tesori d'arte sacra di Roma* 1975; and Di Castro 2010. For the catalogue of the silver ritual objects at the Jewish Museum of Rome, see Liscia Bemporad and Spagnoletto 2024.
4 An in-depth study of the patrimony of the Barberini family is published in Barberini and Dickmann 2021; see also Montagu 1996, 13.
5 Fornari 1968, 136.
6 See ibid., 119–24, and Vale 2017.
7 Foà 1961.
8 The mark was used from February 20, 1773, onward; see Bulgari Calissoni 1987, 44–45.
9 Bulgari 1958, 511.
10 See Z. Giunta di Roccagiovine in Lavagnino 1959, 414. The first known photographic reproduction is found in Cagianelli and Fornari 1965, 93.
11 There is an extensive bibliography on the genesis of the Ghetto; see in particular Berliner 1893; Milano (1964) 1988; Stow 2001; and Di Nepi 2013.
12 Esposito 2013.
13 Two of the synagogues were of the Italian rite: the Scola Tempio, the oldest, for those who had been in Rome since ancient times, and the Scola Nuova, for those who came from other territories of the Papal States. The Scola Catalana, Castigliana, and Siciliana were of Sephardic rite. On the architectural aspect, see Migliau 1993. A sixth synagogue was operative until 1735, then closed by the Holy Office; see Spizzichino 2011.
14 On the techniques used for Roman Jewish textiles, see Davanzo Poli 2017.
15 On the other hand, goldwork by Jews was permitted in Florence until 1649 (Liscia Bemporad 1993), and Jewish silversmiths were active in Piedmont from the end of the eighteenth century, thanks to the more open-minded House of Savoy (Fina 2018).
16 Berliner 1893, 2:84–85: "Des Silbers ist gar viel, und alles ist gezeichnet mit den hebräischen Buchstaben קדש לה' d. h. heilig dem Ewigen." This opening formula made the donation binding from both religious and legal standpoints; see Spagnoletto 2024, 65.
17 Di Castro 1994, 102.
18 Once the gifts had been offered, they became the property of the Scola; they could not be repossessed by the patrons and were used for public prayers. The regulations of 1692 are published in Spagnoletto 2024.
19 Milano (1964) 1988, 329–44.
20 For the census of houses in 1733, see Groppi 2014, 227.
21 Archivio di Stato di Roma, Trenta notai capitolini, Officio 20 (notary Bartholomeus Taschini), January 1775, fols. 68r–v and following.
22 There is evidence that Alessandro Viterbo, another prosperous Roman Jew, used small personalized jewels to seal documents; see Milano (1964) 1988, 375.
23 He also made several donations to Jewish charity confraternities, in the form of either financial assistance or incentives for Ghetto youth to study.
24 Ferrara and Procaccia 2008.
25 Milano (1964) 1988, 99–101.
26 On Jewish cloth merchants and art dealers in the seventeenth century, see Masetti Zannini 1974.
27 For example, in 1657, Leone Iair supplied various carpets and fabrics to Pope Alexander VII Chigi, then took care of the furnishings for the papal residence at Castel Gandolfo; see Ozzola 1908, 85, and Di Castro 2003.

28 Cola 2014, 121.

29 One Torah pointer is in the Israel Museum (fig. 5); the other is in the Jewish Museum of Rome (200).

30 MMA 2024.380a–c.

31 On Italian Jewish crests, see Roth 1967, Bascapè 1983, and Pisa 1984.

32 The surname was found in the documents cited in note 21 above.

33 He drew inspiration from papal and civic maces, adapting them for his new clients; Di Castro 2003, 118.

34 The beams and marble wall plaque bore long, similar inscriptions. The beams donated in 1753 no longer exist, but there is a document that records their inscription. Following is a translation from Hebrew: "Two are your beams, O Scola Nuova, the recommendation and the idea of making them came from Giuseppe Vita Baraffael, may his Rock keep him and grant him life, on the day that they finished the reading of our Holy Law in a triple meeting and congregation. For the life of his wife Devora, may God bless her. Then on the last day of the year of her death, and rest in the treasure of fulfilled and perfect eternal life, he carried out his vow and the beams were set on their base with the name to find her, with her soul at rest in the paradise of glory, on the holy day of Shabbat, 22 of the month of Adar Rishon of the year 'He set up the pillars' (1 Kings 7:21) 5514 from the Creation of the world." (ASCER, Archivio Medievale e Moderno, Scuola Nuova, folder 3He, Sez. 2, fasc. 2, *Iscrizione ebraica e sua traduzione in italiano esistente nei travi maestri della Scuola Nuova*.)

35 ASCER, Archivio Medievale e Moderno, registro 306, December 30, 1853.

36 ASCER, Archivio Medievale e Moderno, Scuola Nuova, folder 3He, Busta 2 Sez. 2, fasc. 39, *Descrizione del Parato e Lampada d'argento di proprietà della famiglia Baraffael nella quale vengono espressi gli oneri che deve adempiere la Scuola per tali oggetti*. In the absence of a specific day, the Hebrew year as a whole, which begins between September and October with the Feast of Rosh Hashanah, is considered.

37 It is identifiable in the engraving by Maximilian Joseph Limpach featured in the designs by Giardini, published in 1714; see González-Palacios 2014, 365.

38 Campitelli 2021, 50–51.

39 D'Onofrio 1957, 196–97.

40 Montagu 2007, 56.

41 MMA 1971.513.18.

42 Bulgari 1958, 511.

43 On the subject of silversmiths who flourished in Rome, see Liscia Bemporad 2024.

44 Only in 1771 was he able to pay his membership fees to the University of Goldsmiths in Rome. Cf. Archivio Università degli Orefici, Rome, Rendiconti del Camerlengo, 12_176_019.

45 As stated in the inscription in the three cartouches, the chandelier was intended to be placed in the center of the Scola Nuova in front of the *aron hakodesh* (holy ark) on the occasion of the Shalosh Regalim (Three Pilgrimages), during the feasts of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. The chandelier is in the Jewish Museum of Rome (225); see Liscia Bemporad and Spagnoletto 2024, 258–59.

46 Montagu 2007, 56–57.

47 *Editto sopra gli Ebrei* 1775, XXVIII.

48 This type of Roman Hanukkah lamp was also used in the nineteenth century, as attested by the lamp in the Jewish Museum, New York (F 5326).

49 MMA 1995.110.

50 Whereas Zappati depicted the traditional seven-branched Temple Menorah, Vanneschi's lamp features the nine-branched Hanukkah lamp.

51 Executed by Andrea Tarchiani and Cosimo Merlini in 1624 (Liscia Bemporad 2014; Nardinocchi 2014).

52 Gregorovius 1872, 98, 99: "è penetrata l'architettura più in uso a Roma. . . . e gli altri arredi del tempio, tutti in argento, di bella forma, quasi destinati a servire di ornamento al pentateuco."

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Denuding Allegory: *California* by Hiram Powers

CHRISTINE GARNIER

> If I were ten years younger, I would set aside my art and go to California for a couple of years, to seek for the true ideals of beauty in the dirt of the Sacramento instead of the marble of Seravezza. I am sure that my toil alone would be crowned with better success there than both study and toil here—but gray hairs, where indeed there is hair upon my head, and crows feet about my eyes, these with my large family, warn me that I have no time to lose—that I must stay here and quarry the little gold I am ever to possess from clay and stone in Florence.[1]

Writing to his fellow expatriate and local friend Mrs. Frances Elliot Austin in 1849, American sculptor Hiram Powers shared his desire to partake in the international

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fig. 1 Hiram Powers (American, 1805–1873). *California*, modeled 1850–55; carved 1858. Marble, 71 × 18¼ × 24¾ in. (180.3 × 46.4 × 62.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of William Backhouse Astor, 1872 (72.3)

phenomena of the California Gold Rush unfolding more than 6,100 miles away. Exhausted by the inconsistent state of his finances, he turned to the Italian quarries of Seravezza to imagine the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains as an allegorical figure. Initially bedecked in Native clothing and jewelry formed of local gold, diamonds, and pearls, the realized *California* now stands entirely nude (fig. 1). A divining rod—the "scepter of California" employed by miners to find metal-rich veins—partially shields her nudity while pointing toward faceted quartz crystals, implying the locus of gold. The subtle twist of her body encourages the viewer to circumambulate the sculpture. Behind her back, she softly cradles a cluster of thorns, a visual warning that "the pursuit of gold *only* is not a path without thorns" (fig. 2).[2] These three iconographic elements—a divining rod, gold-bearing quartz crystals, and thorns—suggest a complex reality: the wealth and abundance of the Golden State could only be reached after "the plague and sorrows which the gold hunters have to endure," as Powers expressed to Austin a year later in 1850.[3] As an allegory of the gold fields that became synonymous with the state, *California* raises questions about the relationship between nineteenth-century sculpture and extraction, especially with regard to their land, labor, and materials.

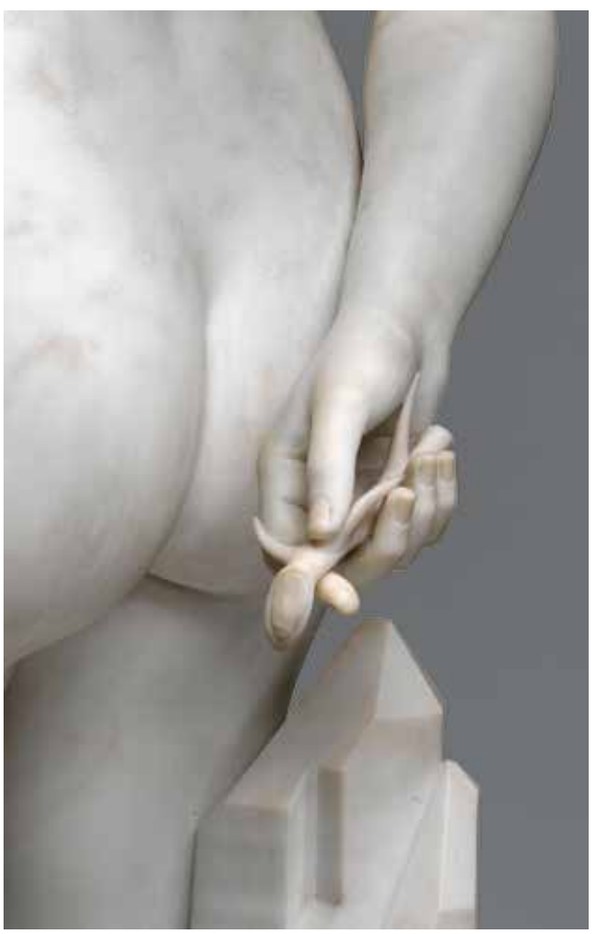

fig. 2 Detail of thorns in *California* (fig. 1)

Scholars frequently overlook *California* for its "incipient staleness" compared to Powers's more famous Neoclassical works.[4] The sculptor rose to acclaim in the United States owing to commissions for portrait busts from the political elite, some completed before he expatriated in 1837 to Florence, where he remained until his death in 1873. After securing a network of patrons abroad, he began developing works in which classicized nudity paired with clear iconography impressed a powerful morale: an apple in the hands of *Eve Tempted* (1839–42; this carving, 1873; marble, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC) positions nudity as a sign of spiritual purity before the Fall; shackles and a cross at the wrist of *The Greek Slave* (modeled 1841–43) suggest physical vulnerability in discourses on slavery; and shackles under the foot of *America* (1848–49; plaster, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC) signal democratic ideals of liberty and freedom.

Nineteenth-century Neoclassical nudes have become prisms through which scholars refract and destabilize questions of power via themes of gender, race, and colonial hierarchies, particularly through the work of Powers.[5] In her foundational study, Charmaine Nelson has read *The Greek Slave* as a double displacement of Blackness in its representation of the topic of slavery and marble's association with whiteness.[6] Expanding this discourse, Caitlin Meehye Beach has examined Powers's economic entanglements with slavery, especially the politics of *The Greek Slave*'s exhibition in the U.S. South, to reveal the fungibility of Neoclassical sculpture and its moralistic messaging.[7] In parallel, Elizabeth Hutchinson has asserted that hypersensual depictions of Native women as classical allegories for the nation, including Powers's *The Last of the Tribes,* efface histories of violence against Indigenous people, as well as dispossession and extractive industry evoked through the sculptures' very materials.[8]

Deepening the exploration of Neoclassical sculpture's entanglements with settler colonial projects and the unstable meaning of allegory, a study of *California* expands this discourse by problematizing the allegorization of land transformed by extractive industry. In passing, scholars have critiqued *California* as a Neoclassical personification of the gold fields, one that "turned a cold marble shoulder to Native Americans, Spaniards, Mexicans and the ethnic medleys of Gold Rush camps."[9] This statement gestures to an expansive

fig. 3 Detail of support in *California* (fig. 1)

body of scholarship on the racial and gendered dynamics of the California Gold Rush. In this article, I approach this discrepancy through a close reading of the sculptor's correspondence, from his initial sharing of ideas with fellow expatriates and his closest advisers to potential clients met during studio visits or through the mail. Across these circles of community, Powers unsuccessfully attempted to reorient his networks toward evisioning the Gold Rush in sculptural form and to place it at a historically significant site. As a result, the nudity of *California* emerges as an unresolved intellectual problem in the sculptor's construction of allegory. How did the ideal female form relate to the rapidly shifting conditions of California's gold fields? Analyzing the sculpture as an unstable site of artistic processes and imagination reveals *California* as evidence of displaced denudation of the land: the plunder of nature to elevate another's culture.

THE SCULPTOR-PROSPECTOR

Powers developed *California* with the hope of attracting a commission from the Golden State. In his correspondence during in the initial stages of designing the allegory, the artist explored rhetorical parallels between his conception of a gold prospector as a sculptor of land and artist as a sculptor of marble. In his letters, Powers connected the gold mine and marble quarry, establishing a relationship between material extraction, artistic process, and aesthetic revelation that persists through details in the final sculpture. Both miner's pick and sculptor's chisel offered a narrow pathway to accumulate Californian gold.

In the passage quoted above, Powers claimed to "seek for the true ideals of beauty in the dirt of the Sacramento instead of the marble of Seravezza." As an aesthetic undertaking, the sculptor asserted a geographic relationship between Sacramento and Seravezza, aligning with period writers who associated California with Italy. For example, the prominent California politician John C. Frémont famously compared these two geographies in his *Geographical Memoir* from 1848: "Like Italy, [California] is a country of mountains and valleys: different from it in its internal structure, it is formed for *unity*; its large rivers begin concentric, and its large valleys appurtenant to the great central bay of San Francisco, within the area of whose waters the dominating power must be found."[10] Frémont's comparison was directed to an elite class of U.S. readers who were familiar with Italy, having likely spent much of their education on the Grand Tour by studying major collections in Florence and visiting studios of expatriate artists such as Thomas Crawford in Rome and Powers in Florence. If Frémont could position Italy to introduce an educated public to the new territory of California, could Powers replicate this comparison and imagine the state through Italian marble?

By way of allegory, Powers impressed how each region is also connected to a specific type of labor. In a letter to his business adviser Sidney Brooks at the start of 1850, Powers commented on his eagerness to "ply the spade pickax and shifter instead of the chisel and modelling stick." In response to his wife Elizabeth's disapproval of such a scheme, he retorted that "the little gold we are ever to possess must be dug out of the marble."[11] Through this imagery, Powers evokes the method of placer mining, in which laborers break up compacted sand and sediment in stream beds with a pickax and shovel, and then sift out gold with a miner's pan. Lumps or small flecks of gold fall to the bottom, amassing in order to become visible to the eye. Historian Elliott West has noted the nostalgia embedded in the word *placer* (meaning pleasure or delight in Spanish), which is

foundational to the Neoclassical construction of beauty.[12] Although Powers would not engage directly with the placer mines, his chisel operates like a pickax to excavate new aesthetic forms. The base of *California* contains passages of rough texture that transition into the base of quartz crystals, as if recently freed from the earth by a miner's pick (fig. 3). Transforming marble into gold-bearing quartz, Powers nods to the shared role of the pickax and chisel in deriving new forms and futures from stone.

For Powers, this form was explicitly Neoclassical in style. In a letter to his childhood friend, U.S. diplomat, and proto-environmentalist George Perkins Marsh, Powers made a direct parallel between the discovery of gold in Californian soil and the archaeological discovery of classical sculpture in Rome:

> I have seen a field in which the Apollo was found, the Venus de Medicis—of Milo of Naples and in short all the noble and beautiful antiques in existence. The imperfections of art may be found there. The impurities with the pure, just as the gold hunters find treasures in our own California—gold mingled with quartz—It is the business of the artist to separate them. Gold cannot be made, but it may be found and if impure, refined and so with form, which is the vehicle of beauty and expression.[13]

By relating the archaeologist's search for ancient classical sculpture with the pursuit of gold, Powers put forth an aesthetic imperative: to sift or separate out ideal form from what he deemed as impure. Yet in this comparison, form is already predetermined. What of new classical forms to be honed from marble rock?

fig. 4 Marble quarry, Carrara, Italy, ca. 1860. Photograph. Hiram Powers Papers, 1819–1953, Box 11, Folder 9, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (HPP)

Mining gold and carving marble share a problem of sight and risk. Both prospector and sculptor work at the threshold of vision to excavate a form without having full information about what lies beyond.[14] The tasks require both to carefully read the surface. Miners looked to the scientific study of geology as well as vernacular traditions for any indicators in the landscape of rich metallic veins, such as rock formations on the surface, different plant growths, and depths of streams. With limited information about this unfamiliar place, many prospectors in California sank time and money into a section of earth only to fail to find a vein. Conversely, for the sculptor, the exposure of any colored vein in a block of white marble could be a financial disaster. Powers traveled to Carrara and Seravezza to inspect marble blocks for his sculptures, looking for any indication of an inherent imperfection to mitigate future issues (fig. 4). While working with expert carvers in his studio for the first version of *California*, Powers found flaws within four different pieces of marble after blocking out most of the figure, succeeding only with the fifth block after having lost $800 on material. He had to write to his eventual patron, the renowned business magnate William B. Astor, for another advance to continue work on the sculpture merely to break even.[15] These kindred subtractive processes were prone to material failures for both miner and sculptor that could have significant financial consequences.

Powers's parallel of marble and gold-bearing quartz was not only about explaining a process, it was also intended to motivate their exchange on the market and allow the sculptor to indirectly profit from the gold strike. Powers was a shrewd businessman who carefully followed global economic trends and speculated about how they would impact his ability to sell his sculptures to European and American patrons. For example, the sculptor anticipated a flood of gold into international markets after news of its discovery at Sutter's Mill in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California, causing both a deflation of the metal's value and an increase in demand for luxury goods and collectibles.[16] In a letter to his friend in New York, U.S. Army Captain Frederick Prime, Powers characterized California as a new "national treasury" for public art commissions, particularly for monuments funded by gold and realized in marble.[17] "The government might now make a handsome appropriation for us artists out of this grand windfall, without feeling it," Powers wrote to his friend and advocate, the Baltimore art collector Charles J. M.

Eaton, who had been lobbying for government art commissions on the artist's behalf. "This is the only [way] I know of for getting hold of some of this gold. I could exchange my new statue (not yet done) of *America* for some of it, thus turning marble into gold."[18]

In addition to promoting and selling ideal sculptures like *California*, Powers also attempted to invest in the emerging Californian quartz mining industry. In January 1851, Powers wrote to his wife's uncle in Washington, DC, with a desire to purchase stock in the Rocky-Bar Mining Company (see fig. 7A).[19] Looking for guidance from such a distance, Powers proposed soliciting Frémont, who frequently promoted quartz mining on his Mariposa estate alongside the geological richness of the state at large.[20] The California senator was also instrumental in developing legislation to restrict mining privileges to U.S. citizens, presumed to be white and male, while intentionally defaulting on cattle contracts with Native Californian communities that were being violently targeted and displaced by gold speculators.[21] Powers did not have the gold to purchase stock in Frémont's Mariposa Mining Company but did have a cache of allegorical busts and full-size figures in his studio. When a block of marble failed for a large sculpture, as it did in the carving of *California*, Powers would assess whether remaining pieces could be used for busts.[22] Looking to this available inventory, Powers proposed trading idealized busts for stock in Mariposa:

> I have mentioned a small sum of money that I could dispose of in this way, by making some exertions, but I could more readily make an adventure of one or two of my works, say a pair of ideal marble busts of my "Slave" and "Proserpine." These would be new things in California and very appropriate too for it is slavish to work to dig gold even if the wife of Pluto stands by to direct the miner downwards in the direction of her infernal abode. Her charms however might cheer him on. I should want no money for them, only a chance at the diggings.[23]

Powers offered his idealized female busts, even more rare than gold, as fungible commodities, undercutting messages of entrapment in *Proserpine* (modeled 1844–49; this carving, 1844, Cincinnati Art Museum) and enslavement in *The Greek Slave* to align them with mining driven by personal interest. Based on Powers's imaginings of working marble as pay dirt, these busts become a type of investor-surrogate to reach California on the sculptor's behalf, "to direct" the miner and "cheer him on." *California* was to be this surrogate and represent Powers within the Golden State.

INVENTING *CALIFORNIA*'S ATTRIBUTES

Instead of materializing the white male miner Powers imagined in his correspondence, *California* personifies land as an idealized female without clear attributes to suggest an identity as Native. Within the trajectory of his oeuvre, this is not entirely surprising. Powers started to design *America* and *California* around the same time with the hope of finally securing a commission from the U.S. government, suggesting that figuring U.S. land as nation-state was a central intellectual problem at the time. Both idealized female nudes draw from Greco-Roman sculptures, including the oft-reproduced Venus de' Medici in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, which formed a canon for Neoclassical sculptors to reference. While *America* is identifiable through its classical drapery, strapped sandals, and fasces, all gesturing to democracy, Powers's original conception for *California* echoed established personifications of the American continent as an ideal and fertile female coded as non-European through accessories, particularly a kirtle and gold jewelry. Mobilizing the long-established allegory of the American continent as a base, Powers attempted to revise his figure's attributes to the localities of the Sierra Nevada Mountains from Florence, with failed results.

Florence was a key city for the development of female allegories of the Four Continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, and America) following the European discovery of the so-called New World. The same collections that contained classical sculpture also held early modern representations of the Americas through which U.S. sculptors could conceptualize national stereotypes of the "American Indian" in the nineteenth century. They included the Medici family, bankers who supported the establishment of Spanish religious, political, and extractive infrastructure within the Americas, and whose art and ethnographic collections formed the basis of museums across Florence that Powers consulted.[24] Scholars including Charmaine Nelson and Freyda Spira have interpreted continental allegories as expressions of imperial dominion—as visual sites where sexualized young women, insinuating so-called virgin territories, are clothed in symbols and attributes that imply both racial identity without color and geographic inferiority to Europe.[25] Partial and full female nudity in allegories of land advance the logics of *vacuum domicilium* and *terra incognita*, Western legal principles that declare "unimproved" or "virgin" land as unclaimed and desirable, and thus available for seizure and colonization. These gendered and sexualized continental allegories operate as part of the grammar Aileen Moreton-Robinson has theorized as "white possession."[26]

fig. 5 Frontispiece to Francisco Hernández, *Rerum medicarum Novae Hispaniae Thesaurus* (*Thesaurus of Medical Things of New Spain*) (Rome, 1651). Engraving. The Huntington Library, San Marino

For the continent of America, artists adorned seminude, classicized bodies with local natural and cultural elements. They included feathered regalia originally inspired by the Tupinambá peoples of Brazil and gold jewelry suggesting extractable wealth—sowing in the mind of the viewer the promise of El Dorado, the mythic American city of gold Spanish conquistadors initially sought. In her analysis of continental allegories, Daniela Bleichmar has examined how idealized, seminude figures representing the Americas in early modern print often served as a surface for other symbols of fecundity like plants and gold. For example, four female and two male figures are positioned against a monumental archway in the frontispiece for Francisco Hernández's *Thesaurus of Medical Things of New Spain* (1651). Dressed in feather capes, skirts, and headdresses, each figure holds a particular attribute connected to the Americas: a globe to impress ideas of trade, a cornucopia and a branch to suggest fecundity, and gold jewelry to evoke mining (fig. 5).[27] On the left side, a nude female allegory holds a branch of coral while lactating, as if Mother Nature is overabundant. Each figure displays a type of wealth extracted from land and ocean and offers it for trade with the spectator.

In comparison, Powers described the first, albeit unrealized, vision of *California* as wearing a kirtle with feather fringe and embroidery, following iconographic trends of the American continent. The figure was meant to don a crown with a single star to celebrate California's recent statehood (1850) on the heels of the U.S.–Mexican War (1846–48). Additional ornaments would comprise locally sourced diamonds, gold flakes, and pearls that had been harvested for centuries by Indigenous Californians. An inverted cornucopia would support the figure; "lumps and grains of native gold" would flow from the basket's opening, amplified with gilding.[28] Powers initially titled the sculpture "Incognita," then quickly switched to the term "La Dorada" in his descriptions to close friends. These terms admit a critical connection between gold, colonial desire, and dispossession.[29] The initial design and names position *California* as emerging from a broader history of extractive colonialism across the Americas.

Because *California* was meant to represent a particular geography within the Americas, Powers sought to produce an iconographic code for his figure that suggested the relationship between land and a geopolitical construct shaped by the Gold Rush. Following the examples of Horatio Greenough and Henry Kirke Brown, Powers attempted to access visual depictions of Indigenous peoples from within the United States as

fig. 6 Hiram Powers. *The Last of the Tribes*, modeled 1867–72; carved 1876–77. Marble, 66⅛ × 22¾ × 32 in. (167.9 × 57.7 × 81.3 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Museum purchase in memory of Ralph Cross Johnson (1968.155.125)

well as items of material culture.[30] Initially, the sculptor turned to his unpredictable brother Samson, who had traveled to the gold fields with his son.[31] After providing a written description of the proposed sculpture, Powers asked Samson to send drawings and daguerreotypes to Florence to assist the artist in imagining physiognomic features as legible signs of racial difference. He stressed the need for descriptions that compared women's features to other racial stereotypes, including "eyes large and turned upward at the outer angles like the Chinese or some of the more eastern American Indians," an anatomical conflation that I will return to below. Powers also requested authentic ethnographic materials to "represent an original native California woman in the native costume made of native materials—no importations."[32] The aim was to gather materials that would "show the figure . . . as much as possible," reiterating the connection between the nude allegory and colonial possession from earlier representations of the continents.[33] Powers never received any "likenesses, costumes, etc. of the Indians" from his brother.[34] Instead, Samson responded with written descriptions of Native women, now lost, that aligned with the sculptor's racist "preconceived ideas of them."[35] Powers had expressed these ideas when he speculated that any Native dress "would cost at least as much in California as would a superb bustle for a maid of honor" in Europe due to reports of hyperinflation in the region.[36]

Anticipating Samson's unreliability, Powers also pursued other channels for information about Californian Indigenous cultures. Powers may have tried to consult adjacent clothing articles at the Museo di Fisica e Storia Naturale di Firenze (La Specola), which contained a small grouping of Northern Plains items assembled by the missionary Giuseppe Bigeschi during his travels throughout Lakhóta and Dakóta homelands in the 1820s. A pair of buckskin moccasins showcasing quillwork and moose-hair embroidery may have influenced the design of Powers's *The Last of the Tribes*, a figural sculpture of a classicized female raced as Native through her hair and embroidered skirt that echoes Powers's original design for *California* (fig. 6). While no items from California were in the Bigeschi collection, Powers found inspiration for the sculpture's support in its quartz samples.[37] Beyond Florence, a July 1851 letter from his friend James F. Penniman records the sculptor's requests to send a "book of Indian portraits and costumes" along with daguerreotypes from California.[38] This might be a reference to George Catlin's *North American Indian Portfolio*, as the artist was actively promoting California and Texas mining speculation in London, yet never included images or portraits of Native Californians.[39] In the final version, the only item in *California* connected to Native North America is a "band of wampum" in the figure's hair—a string of polished whelk shell traded as currency across the continent—which is easily misidentified as a ribbon.[40] This ambiguous band tied around a slipknot hairstyle would become a marker of "Indianness" in Powers's oeuvre.

Without clear features linked to Native Californian cultures, Powers turned to the racial pseudoscience of phrenology as he had many times before. Phrenology posited that the shape, size, and proportions of the cranium revealed attributes of character and intellect, including polygenesis in support of white supremacy and Manifest Destiny. According to art historian Charles Colbert, Powers modeled *California*'s face to be "broad at the temples, the head small and round."[41] A round head suggested uniform development, but its small scale connoted a diminished capacity discriminatorily associated with non-white individuals. Yet the "broad" brow implied advanced sensitive faculties required for diviners. Thus, this figure would have the

capacity to locate, but not seize or *claim*, gold.[42] When writing to his adviser and friend Brooks in 1860, Powers impressed this fallacy central to *terra incognita*: "The gold in California glittered at the feet of the inhabitants for a century or more without being seen—no one thought of looking for gold in the earth and therefore no one saw it."[43] Despite defining the boundaries of each Native nation's homelands recorded in eighteen treaties, the U.S. government denied California Indigenous Nations their inherent sovereignty based on false claims that Native peoples did not comprehend the value of gold, and thus could not "improve" the land through mining.[44] *California* is thus trapped in a liminal state of revealing gold-bearing land through Indigenous knowledge while visualizing land as so-called virginal terrain open for seizure.

THE INSTABILITY OF ALLEGORY

Powers struggled to place the allegory in the very location it personified—not the abstracted state of California, but the gold fields that made the region famous. During the 1850s, Powers imagined *California* could be installed as a monumental bronze cast at three locations that trace prospectors' paths to the epicenter of the Gold Rush (fig. 7 [1–3]). He first suggested a colossal version could be positioned "at the landing of the harbor of San Francisco" to welcome prospectors from across the world.[45] Amplifying the sculpture's power to commemorate historic events, Powers then proposed another monumental version for the gold discovery site of Sutter's Mill along the American River. After selling his first full-scale version to Astor in 1858, who would donate it to The Metropolitan Museum of Art fourteen

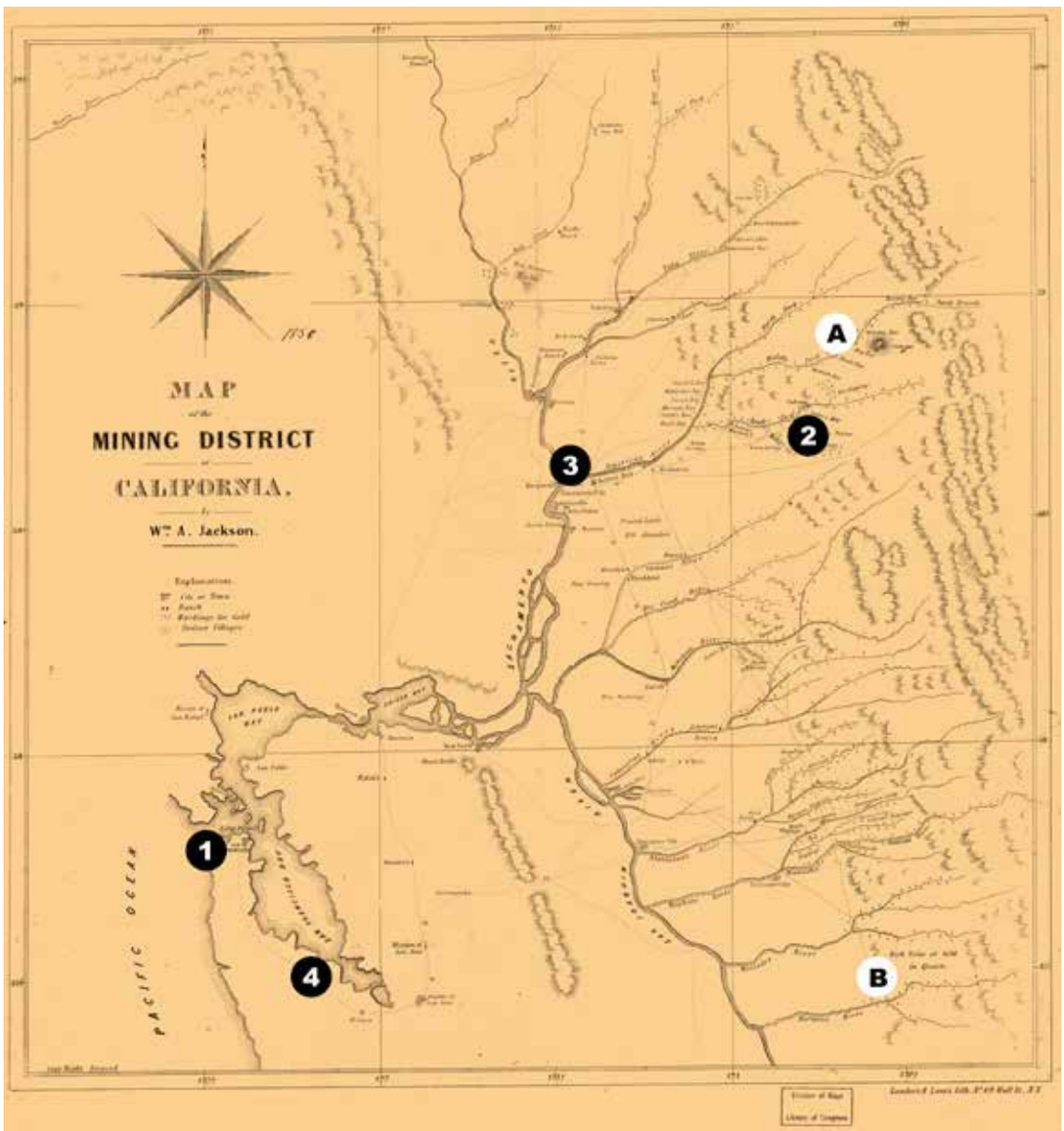

fig. 7 William A. Jackson. *Map of the Mining District of California*, 1850. 16⅞ × 16½ in. (43 × 42 cm). Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC, World Digital Library. Key to locations related to *California*. Powers's potential investments: (A) Rocky-Bar Mining Company, (B) Mariposa Mining Company. Powers's proposed sites for a bronze monument of California: (1) entrance to San Francisco Bay, (2) Sutter's Mill, (3) Sacramento. Installation location for *California* (second version) at (4) Thurlow Lodge in Menlo Park.

years later, Powers intensified his efforts to secure a commission for the state's Capitol Building in Sacramento with the assistance of the Forty-Niner and early San Francisco real estate developer George Marye, Sr. Only in 1859 did the sculptor finally relinquish any reference to the figure's "Native" identity, instead asserting California's likeness to "the most attractive thing in nature, a beautiful woman in a state of nudity."[46] Powers's original assertion of the sculpture's "Native" identity paired with its ideal placement within the gold region raises questions about the artist's site-specific knowledge beyond the search for items of Native material culture.

Over the course of the decade, the discovery of gold in California transformed from international news to national lore, removing early mentions of Indigenous miners in the gold fields. In 1847, John Sutter hired James Marshall to build a sawmill on the banks of the American River to support the development of his ranch. After leasing a plot of land from elders of the Nisenan Tribe of California, Marshall and ten Nisenan laborers discovered flakes of gold along the river's banks in January 1848. Sutter and Marshall attempted to contain the news while hiring 150 Indigenous miners to prospect for more gold. Yet word of gold spread quickly, reaching Powers in Europe around August of that year. Men of all ages and nationalities—including Native American men—voyaged by sea and land to prospect in California, a group collectively called the "Forty-Niners" that would be typified as white male U.S. citizens in paintings, photographs, and prints.[47] Others attempted to partake in the gold fields from a distance—purchasing speculative mining claims, investing in steamship routes, and arbitraging tools and other goods necessary for mining. These expanding networks and markets connected the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the rest of the world, all threaded through the emerging cities of San Francisco and Sacramento, the original site of Sutter's Fort.

Powers imagined the gold fields as a cosmopolitan space that contained a multitude of identities fortified in early images and writings from the period. In a letter to Brooks, Powers declared, "All Europe is singing with golden sounds from California, and I dare say that thousands will go to that country from every port of the Old World. What a motley population it will make as a

fig. 8 Kelloggs and Comstock, publisher. *California Gold Diggers: Mining Operations on the Western Shore of the Sacramento River,* between 1849 and 1852. Hand-colored lithograph. Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. Collection of Early Californian and Western American Pictorial Material. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

people will grow up from this stock, it will present to the world an aggregate of the human race."[48] While focused on Europe, this passage suggests Powers's conscious framing of the Rush as an international event. *California Gold Diggers*, a lithograph published between 1849 and 1852, illustrates such a heterogeneous space (fig. 8). The foreground is lined with figures of varying attire and physiognomy. At left, a man in a blue suit and top hat stands between two Black men. Two Native men with long, dark hair and wearing buckskin trousers sift pay dirt with a sluicing box. A white figure in a skirted coat with collar drives a spade into the ground under the direction of a squatting Native figure. A woman looks away in disapproval while a missionary observes with interest, his hand reaching into his bag as if to pay for the same guidance. At far right, men wearing brimmed hats and peasant caps, breeches and trousers, cluster around a cellar that opens like a grand piano. On the opposite bank, prospectors are seen collecting water almost solely in baskets as a skirmish breaks out downriver. Tent and tepee sit to the left of a single willow tree. In this print, European peasants, Spanish priests, American investors, Black laborers, and Indigenous workers inhabit the same space along the Sacramento River, affirming the racially heterogeneous reality of gold fields that were nevertheless often visualized as spaces of individual, white masculinity.

Works of art about the gold fields that were displayed in Europe may have depicted Indigenous miners in similar ways to *California Gold Diggers*. During the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, where Powers would famously display *The Greek Slave*, Frémont sponsored a panorama of scenes from Oregon and California that included a depiction of a "party of Indians working for a Mexican company."[49] Given Powers's specific interest in Frémont's mining ventures, it is possible the sculptor visited the panorama while fabricating *California*.

Powers's visual sources ultimately remain a mystery; yet, his correspondence confirms his knowledge of the 1848 report by California military governor Colonel Richard Barnes Mason.[50] Reproduced widely across the United States and Europe, Mason described a landscape newly covered in canvas tents, shanty stores, and men "at work in the full glare of the sun, washing for gold." On the one hand, the report affirms an ease of prospecting that Powers imagined: "the laboring man wants nothing but his pick and shovel and tin pan, with which to dig and wash the gravel; and many frequently pick gold out of the crevices of rocks with their butcher knives."[51] This language of abundance is found throughout published personal accounts, including Edward Buffum's *Six Months in the Gold Mines*, which is also referenced in Powers's correspondence. Buffum describes gold as "the natural product of the soil" throughout the whole region.[52] During this period, access to gold took on a democratic nature, seemingly available to everyone, as visualized in *California Gold Diggers*, to support an unlimited number of potential futures that could challenge racial and socioeconomic hierarchies.

Unlike published personal accounts from the later 1850s, Mason's report emphasized the sizable presence of Indigenous miners in the gold fields. The military governor estimated that in August 1848 more than half of the approximately two thousand workers in the gold fields were Native, and some employed Indigenous technologies to prospect. Instead of using imported tin pans, male and female Indigenous miners were known to use or sell "closely-woven willow baskets."[53] A principal art form practiced across California Native communities, basket weaving lies at the intersection of botanical knowledge, ecological stewardship, and aesthetic design. Women often wove baskets for cradles, harvesting, cooking, storage, and ceremony, and considered them more valuable than gold. Originally designed to separate nuts from their shells, miners adapted basketed winnowing trays as sifting pans. The artist of *California Gold Diggers* alludes to this history by depicting miners working with yellow baskets along the Sacramento River. As the stewards of harvesting and basketry knowledge, local Indigenous women also organized their own Native-run gold mining outfits.[54] Either through wages earned or gold prospected outright, Mason reported that Indigenous men and women had "suddenly become the consumers of the luxuries of life."[55] Given this context, a sculpture of a Native female figure at the epicenter of the Gold Rush seems as justified as that of a white male prospector.

It is critical to pause and acknowledge that necessity drove Indigenous prospecting, revealing a landscape whose seemingly abundant resources were coming under significant pressure. Historians Susan Lee Johnson and Benjamin Madley have shown how local Native peoples were motivated to mine for gold and trade for Western-style textiles as the influx of non-Native people led to the rapid decline of local flora and fauna. The goods included materials for basketry and ancestral regalia, such as tanned elk hide, cottonwood bark, and bird feathers. Under conditions of scarcity, groups of Euro-American prospectors also incited genocidal campaigns against Native Californians to both seize land and eliminate competition.[56] This violence

fig. 9 James W. Marshall Monument, Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park, Coloma. Dedicated May 1890. Bronze, granite, and plaster. H. including base, 41½ in. (105.4 cm)

took on many forms, including femicide critical to the ongoing crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S) crisis across the continent.[57] The Native women whose regalia and likenesses Powers sought were hypervisible and under constant threat.

Nisenan and Miwok lands around Sutter's Mill were the epicenter of settler violence. In 1850, the California legislature passed the "Act for the Government and Protection of Indians," which protected the enslavement of Native men and women for labor, trade, and forced sex work despite California's entrance into the Union as a free state. White U.S. prospectors formed the Mariposa Battalion in 1851, launching an open campaign of genocide against Native peoples within and beyond the gold fields. At the same time, the state started to pay bounties for the murder of Indigenous people. Responding to this escalation, the U.S. federal government sent a delegation to entreat with Indigenous Nations in California between 1851 and 1852. The Senate failed to ratify all eighteen drafted treaties, denying Native communities their intrinsic sovereignty, representation, and legal protections. State-sanctioned genocidal campaigns continued, resulting in an eighty percent decline in California's Native population.[58]

Given the site's centrality in histories of violence to maintain white possession, it is not surprising that Powers was unable to sell *California* as a public monument. Following Marshall's death in 1885, members of the Placerville chapter of the Native Sons of the Golden West lobbied the State Legislature to construct a monument and tomb to the argonaut (fig. 9). The sculpture by Francis Marion Wells remains on Marshall's property to this day. A figure dressed in plain work clothes and a brimmed hat looks east across the Sierra Nevada foothills, manifesting the archetype of the Forty-Niner. He holds a nugget of gold in his right hand as he points down toward the American River with his left. The shaft of the pedestal is ornamented with the prospector's tools: a pickax, shovel, and pan. During the dedication, A. F. Jones of Butte, Montana, gave an oration that connected Marshall's pointing hand to "the spot where the womb of the earth gave forth its glittering treasures," while interpreting the land as "fruitful virgin soil."[59] Unlike Powers's *California*, the James W. Marshall Monument epitomizes the Forty-Niner as the dominant visual representation of the gold fields, one that aligns individuality, masculinity, and whiteness with U.S. land ownership.[60] As a work of art, it completely conceals the critical role of Indigenous peoples within this historical landscape. Powers's allegorical centering of site, instead of the individual prospector as in the James W. Marshall Monument, threatens to divulge the extractive, violent networks of dispossession required to maintain settler-colonial constructions of place.

TECHNOLOGY AS LAND TRANSFORMED

When read against the history of the land, the iconographic and aesthetic elements of *California* place pressure on the relationship between allegorical nudity and "virgin" terrain, rendering the beautiful obscene. This concept is embedded in two iconographic elements formed of organic material: the branch of thorns in her right hand and the divining rod, a Y-shaped twig, in her left hand (see fig. 2). In an ode from 1853, C. A. Humason allegorized the state of California as a woman with "her wild and deep ravines; *Her* every feature bold." To come to know her and her gold, the narrator would mobilize his tools: "The *spade* shall be our 'magic wand,'/ The *pick* 'divining rod.'"[61] Humason's allegory specifically situates the rod as a mesmeric conduit between human and landscape as embodied in *California*, a connection only to be troubled by thorns.

Diviners originally employed rods made of local nutwoods to locate underground water sources through telluric energies felt by those with enhanced sensitivities.

fig. 10 Carleton E. Watkins (American, 1829–1916). *Malakoff Diggins, Near North Bloomfield, Nevada County,* ca. 1871. In Watkins, *Photographs of the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco, 1862–76). Special Collections, Stanford University, California

Miners applied this logic to prospecting for precious metals shortly after. The rod has iconographic origins in European traditions connected to the subterranean and water. For instance, Moses struck a rock twice with a staff to provide water for the Israelites in the Desert of Zin (Book of Numbers XX, 1–13); additionally, it is an attribute of the Greek goddess Minerva, who used a wooden staff to send souls to or save souls from the underworld. Eventually, divining rods were used for different types of mining, including precious metals. Despite denunciation from scientists starting in the sixteenth century, divination seemed to follow gold prospectors across the nineteenth-century U.S. West. The diviner remained a vernacular specialist whose intimate knowledge of local geography—the taste of water, knowledge of herbs and plants, and sensitivity to vapors—was seen in contrast to academic training in geology.[62] The divining rod stands in as an opaque reference to local knowledge, wielded by an Indigenous woman rather than the male settler-prospector.

In contrast, *California*'s branch covered in thorns dissuades the viewer from further exploration of the landscape upon approach, operating a risk Powers hoped "to dodge," as he expressed to his friend Cameron.[63] Each of the three thorns on the branch comes into contact with the allegory's hand, pressing against her palm, pointer knuckle, and the tip of her middle finger, but they do not pierce the skin. For Powers, the thorns were symbols of hardship, and even failure, for prospectors, investors, and artists alike. Yet they are also one of nature's mechanisms of protection and deterrence. Thorns prevent large animals from overharvesting or harming the plant, while also providing safe havens for smaller animals escaping predators. *California* gently cradles them; the thorns neither threaten the body of the viewer-investor nor protect the allegory of land. This shifting tension between mesmeric reading of land and its deflection operates around the third symbol of the quartz support.

Between the first design and final execution of *California*, the primary methods for mining radically changed from an idealized, individual effort to a capital-intensive industry. California's divining rod, actually and figuratively, points to the subterranean mining of quartz veins. Despite Powers's aforementioned excitement about this potential industry, companies focused on quartz-mining in the 1850s struggled to adapt machinery to local California veins, retain skilled laborers to sink shafts, and attract capital investors to cover the high costs of operation. As a boom-and-bust industry, hard-rock mining could become a thorn in the side of any investor, at any time. In *California*, while the outcropping of faceted crystals of quartz supports the allegory of the state, the pointed ends lead the eye directly to the branch held in the figure's hands. The compositional flow between symbols—the diviner's rod, gold-bearing quartz, and thorns—suggests a tumultuous narrative arc for any investor, including Powers.

If Powers was to attract a gold baron for his *California*, it was more likely that the industrialist would have made his money in hydraulic mining, the dominant form of gold extraction expanding across the state in the 1850s. Carleton Watkins's photograph *Malakoff Diggins*, made for the North Bloomfield Mining and Gravel Company around 1871, romanticized the process of hydraulic mining that was introduced to California around 1852 (fig. 10). Six liquid arcs chisel away layers of dirt, or "overburden," destabilizing topsoil layers of grass and trees, collapsing root systems and animal tunnels immediately beneath, and exposing layers of different sediment built over millennia. Water no longer passively revealed gold at the bottom of a pan, but operated "like a scalpel that could carve away entire mountainsides in a matter of days," according to Jason Weems.[64] A network of waste lay beyond the frame: twelve billion tons of debris was sent downstream, choking fisheries, clogging wetlands, and damaging farmland. Ultimately, the landscape was chiseled down and stripped bare.

In *Malakoff Diggins*, four ambiguous figures wade in the runoff at the middle of the picture plane to raise questions about the shifting state of labor in the gold fields following the California genocide. Hydraulic

mining required complex irrigation systems that could deliver enough water under significant pressure to open-pit mines. Mining industrialists depended on Chinese laborers who held advanced knowledge about irrigation systems for farming. When Powers completed the design for *California* in 1855, Chinese laborers had helped develop more than 1,159 miles of ditches, pipes, and hoses that delivered water from man-made dams to gold-rich areas, defacing hills down to limestone bedrock that dried white like marble.[65] Yet in their annual reports, directors for North Bloomfield described infrastructure development in passive language, eliding mention of the Chinese workers who were essential to the continuation of gold mining across the state.[66] When Powers described *California*'s eyes as "large and turned upward at the outer angles like the Chinese or some of the more eastern American Indians" to Samson in 1850, he could not have known the violent racism both communities would experience.[67] Absent from both *California* and Watkins's photographs are the hundreds of Chinese gold miners who worked to transform California's landscape into gold.

The nudity of *California*, even though she wields a divining rod and leans against quartz, becomes a central aesthetic element that connects the allegory to the gold fields. The verb "to denude" was originally defined in terms of the human body: "to strip; to divest of all covering; to make bare or naked." In the 1840s, a second definition appeared: "washing away the surface of the earth by the deluge or other flood."[68] Motivated by the emergence of the field of geology, this definition evokes deep time, particularly the process by which glaciers cut through earth to create riverbeds and streams.

fig. 11 Carleton E. Watkins. *Untitled (The Library, Milton Latham Residence, San Francisco),* 1874. In Watkins, *Photographs of the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco, n.d.). Special Collections, Stanford University, California

These mechanisms enriched California's waterways with its gold deposits centuries before the Spanish conquistadors and U.S. prospectors violently claimed the land. The mountains and hills of the Sierras that *California* was meant to personify were leveled under pressurized water to find gold not immediately apparent to the naked eye. The language of denudation captures the instability of land and meaning under extractive pressures in Powers's final version of *California*.

Upon witnessing the denuding of the California landscape, several writers described hydraulic mining as bodily mutilation, contrasting sharply against the idealism of *California*. Poet and *New-York Tribune* contributor Bayard Taylor, reflecting on changes in the environment between 1849 and 1862, analogized hydraulic mining as a violent denuding of a female body: "Nature here reminds one of a princess fallen into the hands of robbers, who cut off her fingers for the sake of the jewels she wears."[69] Taylor captured the physicality of the landscape's transformation, while simultaneously gendering the earth as female to raise alarm. Rhetoric of dominance over nature bolstered by industrialists often suppressed eco-critical analogies akin to Taylor's disfigured allegory of the land. In 1884 following the court ruling in *Woodruff v. North Bloomfield Gravel Mining Company*—the company that operated Malakoff Diggins—the government banned hydraulic mining in the state of California, yet the denuding of land could not be undone. While Powers's *California* is ideal, her stark nudity, scraped clean of adornment, allegorized a place stripped of its recognizable, distinct features.

CONCLUSION

Powers could not find a market to make *California* as profitable as the pay dirt she was crafted to represent. In 1867, almost two decades after the initial discovery of gold, Powers sold a second version of the sculpture (unlocated; presumed destroyed) to California senator and railroad financier Milton Latham for his private residence at Thurlow Lodge in Menlo Park, just south of San Francisco (see fig. 7 [4])[70] Latham hired Carleton Watkins to photograph his estate in 1873 and he captured *California* in a niche of the library, surrounded by two suits of armor, Empire-style furniture, and various paintings, including a landscape painting of verdant trees and a calm river in moonlight at left (fig. 11).[71] A sublime depiction, this landscape operates as an antithesis to Watkins's *Malakoff Diggins*. The disjuncture is significant because Watkins misidentified *California* as a Greco-Roman cast of *Diana*, realizing Powers's fear

that the allegory would be mistaken as "a copy of the Venus de Milo or some other antique."[72] Within the space she was meant to allegorize, the sculpture did not signify. Ideal representation and actuality only merged in Watkins's album, *Photographs of the Pacific Coast* (1862–76), in which the image of *California*'s installation at Thurlow Lodge was embedded alongside landscape photographs from across the state, including the crude truth of hydraulic gold mining in *Malakoff Diggins*.

As a precious metal universally recognized for its fungibility, gold alone refuses the language of site specificity. Extracting gold necessitates the defacement of land, flattening unique features necessary for a system of signs to develop. When looking to the creation process for the sculpture, we start to see ideologies at play that are not forthcoming in its final iconographic program, simultaneously fortifying and concealing forces of extraction, land seizure, and racial superiority central to settler colonialism. Caught in this double bind, *California* remains an unresolved terrain where ideal representation perpetually confronts denuded landscapes of extraction—places that still demand restitution and protection.

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NOTES

1 Hiram Powers to Frances E. Austin, August 1849, HPP.
2 Quote from *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences* 1859b. This description was originally provided in Powers to Samson Powers, August 18, 1850, HPP. References to the "scepter of California" are contained in Powers to George Gordon, March 3, 1867, HPP.
3 Powers to Austin, September 5, 1850, HPP.
4 Much scholarship has focused on Powers's failure to secure commissions for *California*, William B. Astor's purchase in 1855, and Astor's subsequent gift to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1872 as the first work by an American artist. See Gardner 1949; Garrett 1970, 314; Crane 1972, 230–32; Craven 1978, 120–21; Wunder 1991, 1:166 (quote) and 2:124–27; Clark 1997, 79–81; and Lauretta Dimmick in Tolles 1999, 18–20, no. 7.
5 Pointon 1990, 11–34.
6 Nelson 2007, 75–112.
7 Beach 2022, 41–76.
8 Hutchinson 2024, 176–80.
9 Schwartz 2018, 62.
10 Quote republished in Chaffin 2002, 388.
11 Powers to Sidney Brooks, January 3, 1850, HPP.
12 West 1998, 106.
13 Powers to George Perkins Marsh, July 21, 1850, HPP.
14 This reading is informed by Jennifer Roberts's notion of print "made darkly," or viewing a print as "a recording of an event that occurred beyond the range of looking." Roberts 2024, 16.
15 Powers to William B. Astor, May 21, 1857, HPP. As is well established in the literature, sculptors like Powers did not actually carve their own sculptures, but worked with an expert team in the production of art. See Hatt, Droth, and Edwards 2014, 26.
16 Powers to Sidney Brooks, January 3, 1850, HPP.
17 Powers to Frederick Prime, February 19, 1849, HPP.
18 Powers to Charles J. M. Eaton, January 27, 1849. For context on Eaton's relationship with Powers, see Wunder 1991, 1:140, 152–53.
19 Powers references "Rocky Bar" in his letter to Mr. Boyd Reilly, January 8, 1851, HPP. This company was the first to attempt stock sales in major cities, as discussed in Wheat 1933.
20 Powers to Reilly, January 8, 1851, HPP. Powers seems to be following Frémont's previous mining endeavors as well in Powers to Brooks, January 3, 1850, HPP.
21 Johnson 2000, 263.
22 When updating William Astor about his failure in carving *California*, Powers notes that two of the four failed blocks are "too much cut up to serve for anything else, but one or two small busts." Powers to Astor, May 21, 1857, HPP.
23 Powers to Reilly, January 8, 1851, HPP. This scheme did not seem to come to fruition as no works by Powers are mentioned in discussions of Frémont's estate sale (*New York Times* 1877, 8).
24 Markey 2016.
25 Nelson 2004, 167–68; Spira 2021. On the colonial entanglements of the continents, see Lowe 2015.
26 Moreton-Robinson 2015, 114, 118–22.
27 Bleichmar 2017, 12–17, 43.
28 Powers to Samson Powers, August 18, 1850, HPP. Indigenous pearl sourcing is referenced in Buffum 1850, 107; see also Dominguez Torres 2024.
29 For example, see Powers to James Cameron, September 23, 1850, HPP. Wunder 1991, 1:163.
30 Lemmey 2009, 72–74; Lemmey 2021, 134. Brown may also have borrowed paintings of Native Americans by Charles Bird King in the collection of Horatio Greenough. See Dippie 1990, 112–13, 462n29.

31 Samson fled to California after Hiram Powers settled his brother's debts by rerouting payment for a portrait-bust commission. Wunder 1991, 1:162.
32 Powers to Samson Powers, September 5, 1850, HPP.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., February 5, 1851.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid. Powers repeated his request for ethnographic material in his letter to Samson Powers, March 4, 1852, HPP. Samson leaked his brother's early design for *California* to national papers, resulting in a frenzy of curiosity among U.S. art bulletins in 1851, including *The Literary World* (March 22, 1851, 237); *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (May 1, 1851, 33); *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* (November 1851, 56); and *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* (November 29, 1851, 491).
37 Powers mentioned the "Museum of Florence" in a letter to Samson Powers, September 5, 1850, HPP. For the quartz reference, see Hiram Powers to George Gordon, February 24, 1867, HPP.
38 James F. Penniman to Hiram Powers, July 7, 1851, HPP.
39 Dippie 1990, 136–39.
40 Powers to George Gordon, March 5, 1867, HPP. On collections in Florence, see Zavattaro 2014, 133.
41 Powers quoted in Colbert 2000, 537.
42 Colbert 2000, 540.
43 Powers to Sidney Brooks, February 7, 1860, HPP.
44 On California treaties, see Anderson, Ellison, and Heizer 1978.
45 Powers to Samson Powers, August 18, 1850, HPP.
46 *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences* 1859a. A bill for a commission was proposed before the state legislature and failed. See George T. Marye, Sr. to Hiram Powers, December 10, 1860; May 8, 1861; May 20, 1861, HPP. For more on Marye's commission, see Angel 1881, 107.
47 For an overview of the California Gold Rush and its material culture, see Blodgett 1999.
48 Powers to Sidney Brooks, January 17, 1849, HPP.
49 Frémont's description of his route across the Rocky Mountains included scenes of the gold fields, among them a "party of Indians working for a Mexican company," confirming the role of Indigenous laborers alongside Euro-American prospectors to audiences abroad. Frémont 1851, 11. On the Mariposa Mining Company, see Spence 1984, xlv–li.
50 While the letter names a "Gen. Marion," the reference is to Mason. See Charles J. M. Eaton to Hiram Powers, December 8, 1848, HPP.
51 Mason's letter of August 17, 1849, was reproduced in *New York Daily Herald* 1848.
52 Buffum 1850, 63. Buffum's pamphlet is mentioned in Hiram Powers to Reilly, January 8, 1851, HPP.
53 *New York Daily Herald* 1848.
54 Johnson 2000, 195 and 223; for more on the history of California Native basketry, see Bibby 1996.
55 *New York Daily Herald* 1848.
56 For an overview of Native miners in the California Gold Rush, see Rawls 1976, 28–45; Johnson 2000, 220–26; Madley 2017, 68–73; and Madley 2024.
57 A number of Native artists have called for an end to the MMIWG2S epidemic, from Jaime Black and her REDress Project to the Jingle Dress Project by Dion Tapahe, Erin Tapahe, JoAnni Begay, and Sunni Begay.
58 Between 1846 and 1870, California's Indigenous population fell from 150,000 to only 30,000 (Madley 2017, 3).
59 *San Francisco Chronicle* 1890.
60 On the topic of gold mining, whiteness, and masculinity, see Ott 2014, 179–215.
61 Humason 1853.
62 Several critical industrial journals discussed the divining rod. For example, *United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* 1850, 218; *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences* 1858; *Scientific American* 1870; and *Mining & Scientific Press* 1877.
63 Powers to Cameron, September 23, 1850. Powers also writes, "I hope she will be grateful to her creator and give me some of her gold without allowing me to see or feel her thorns." Powers to Edward Everett, May 23, 1850, HPP.
64 Weems 2024, 49; see also Angus 2024, 2–3. For a short history of hydraulic mining, see *San Francisco Chronicle* 1868.
65 *Daily Morning Union* 1893; Isenberg 2005, 23–74; Hoskins 2015.
66 See Smith 1875; see also Ott 2014, 180.
67 Chung 2011, 8. See also Ngai 2021.
68 Webster 1845, 235.
69 Taylor 1862, 155. For other period examples, see *Daily Alta California* 1851 and *Scientific American* 1861. On the longer history of portraying nature as body, see Merchant 2003.
70 Powers to Milton S. Latham, June 3, 1867, HPP.
71 Marien 1993, 21. Powers would ask Latham to send Redwood seeds for his garden following the arrival of the sculpture. Powers to Latham, July 30, 1868, HPP. Robert B. Woodward purchased a bust and installed it in Woodward's Gardens in San Francisco during the 1870s. See Wunder 1991, 2:126.
72 Powers to Sidney Brooks, July 1860, HPP. Additionally, Powers attempted to rebrand the sculpture as "Australia" to attract British clients. Powers to William B. Astor, May 23, 1861; Powers to M. M. Holloway, September 23, 1862; Powers to C. B. Holland, September 13, 1863, HPP.

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Eliza Greatorex and Plein-Air Etching at Mont Saint-Michel

KATHERINE MANTHORNE

In 1887 a remarkable event occurred that helped shape the future course of American art. Print curator Sylvester Rosa Koehler shined a spotlight on women artists by curating the first extensive display of their work. Opened at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and expanded for a run at the Union League Club in New York the following year, *The Work of the Women Etchers of America* featured more than four hundred etchings by twenty-four artists. Among them, he identified Eliza Pratt Greatorex (1819–1897) as a pioneering figure of the group (fig. 1).[1] The show generated a substantial amount of commentary from the press in which individual artists and works received less attention, not surprisingly, than gender issues. A key bone of contention centered on whether artwork by females should be segregated from that of

Metropolitan Museum Journal, volume 60, 2025. Published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with the University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.1086/739635. © 2025 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

fig. 1 Unidentified photographer (possibly Edouard Fiorillo, French, active 1860–1900). *Eliza Greatorex at Etching Table, Paris*. From Photographs of Artists in their Studios Collection, ca. 1885–90. Courtesy of the Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library (MS.014)

their male counterparts and featured in a dedicated display. More fundamentally, the "women's question" came down to whether women could or should be artists.[2] Advancing Greatorex as a progenitor of women etchers, Koehler was attempting to address these questions, for by the time of the show she had been a professional artist—a widow supporting herself and her four children by means of her art—for more than thirty years. In 1869 her fellow (male) artists had elected her as an Associate of the National Academy of Design, making her one of only two women to be so honored. She had first made her name as a landscape painter with works such as *On the Hudson River, Near Idlewild*, an oil-on-paper sketch depicting a bend in the Hudson River near Idlewild, home of romantic American author Nathaniel Parker Willis (fig. 2). Soon she was also studying with James Smillie to learn the etching process and exhibited the *Pass of St. Gothard-Etching* at the National Academy of Design in 1868.[3] Dissatisfied with the results (she was limited by several factors, including the scarcity of etching presses in New York at the time), she put her printmaking on hold until around 1880 when she was able to devote herself to the study of plein-air etching in France. She showed eleven works in the 1887 landmark exhibition, one scene in Norway and the rest created in Italy and France, including three of Mont Saint-Michel, the product of a personal pilgrimage to the sacred site.[4]

Pilgrimage is generally conceived as an excursion to a site of worship or a sacred place, a special form of devotion combining the physical journey of the body with the inward journey of the spirit or soul. The individual participates in the travel to reach the destination: impressive architectural monuments that were built to honor saints or other religious figures whose relics are often preserved there. Although we tend to associate this form of devotion with the Middle Ages, in fact it has continued unabated, with modern women and men setting out on pilgrimage to focus on self-improvement, pay homage to a saint, reaffirm their faith, or fulfill some deeply personal, spiritual need.[5] Although the scholarship on pilgrimage is vast and multidisciplinary, little attention has yet been paid to nineteenth-century artists, and even less to women artists, as pilgrims. Since publishing my book *Restless Enterprise: The Art and Life of Eliza Pratt Greatorex* (2020), I have been pondering the artist's travels to and prints of Mont Saint-Michel as embodiments of pilgrimage.

PATHS TO PARADISE: HISTORIC BACKGROUND

For well over a millennium, Mont Saint-Michel has been one of the most popular places of pilgrimage in the West, along with Santiago de Compostela in Spain and the cities of Jerusalem and Rome. Men, women, and children followed what was termed the "paths to Paradise" to reach this remote abbey rising out of the bay off the northwest coast of France. This spectacular architectural monument has played crucial roles in French history over the centuries and in the spiritual lives of the global travelers attracted there. The abbey of Mont Saint-Michel is perched atop a small granite island of only seventeen acres, with the individual buildings of the complex wrapping around the rocky cone of land. It graces the bay that separates Normandy from Brittany, which experiences the most extreme tides in Europe, where the water can rise and fall as much as forty-five feet in a day, advancing at speeds of 210 feet per minute. Add to this the patches of quicksand on the mudflats at low tide that trap people on foot, as depicted in scenes 16 and 17 of the Bayeux Tapestry (ca. 1092), where the knights struggle in the sands surrounding the islet. For pilgrims these conditions meant not only that crossing over to the Mont could be dangerous, but also that at high tide the magnificent stone edifice seemed to float on the sea like a miraculous vision.[6]

Its history dates to 708, when the Archangel Michael was said to have appeared to Aubert, the Bishop of Avranches, and requested that he build a sanctuary at its summit. This structure became the nucleus of a Benedictine abbey famous for its library and treasury that began to attract expanding numbers of pilgrims. A village sprouted up to house and feed

fig. 2 Eliza Greatorex (American, b. Ireland, 1819–1897). *On the Hudson River, Near Idlewild*, 1864. Oil on paper mounted on board, overall 5⅛ × 10⅜ in. (13 × 26.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Muriel J. Kogan Bequest, 2024 (2024.21)

them and by the eleventh century a new, larger abbey was constructed on the steep-sided mount. The builders achieved an amazing feat, constructing four crypts around the tip of the rock, and on top of this—at the very peak—a large abbey church. By the thirteenth century the king of France, Philip Augustus, financed the next building phase: La Merveille, the beautiful Gothic abbey towering five hundred feet above sea level, composed of two three-story buildings, crowned by the cloister and the monks' refectory. At its crown stands St. Michael wielding his legendary sword to vanquish Satan, who has adopted the shape of a dragon. Wave upon wave of political upheaval impacted life on the mount. At the time of the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) it served as a military fortress while during the French Revolution it became a dreaded prison, which it remained until 1863, when restoration commenced so that it could be opened to the public. Monastic life on the mount was only reinstated in 1966, on its 1,000th anniversary, when a group of monks and nuns took up residence, providing a spiritual presence and guiding pilgrims on their visits. The pilgrims went by many names—*Michelettes*, *miquelots*, and *pastoureaux*—and numbered among them visual artists.[7]

Greatorex's etching *Mont Saint-Michel* provides the establishing shot, as it were: a full view of the monument and surrounding water (fig. 3). Although a causeway connecting the island to the mainland was built in 1878–80, prior to her visit in 1887, her picture does not conform to a prospect from that roadway. Rather she has chosen the northeast perspective. To achieve this angle, she could have walked out on the mudflats, but it seems unlikely that the nearly seventy-year-old artist trudged across the soggy sand and risked being trapped in quicksand or overtaken by the precarious tides. "Visitors easily find small vessels manned by fishermen of the Mount, who are courageous, experienced sailors and the safest guides that can be found," Édouard Corroyer explained. As the architect overseeing the restoration of the site he knew just how to obtain the optimal view: "By embarking at the gate of the town, this voyage of circumnavigation may be made in less than an hour; it is the best means of seeing all the beauty of the Mount."[8] Probably the artist—armed with her etching needles and selection of prepared metal plates (approximately 12.7 × 17.8 cm)—engaged just such a fishing boat.[9] We can imagine her perched in the stern, taking in the changing vistas as the fisherman rowed her around the island, "all the fronts of the old monastary [*sic*] seem to be unrolled, offering successively the most imposing and most majestic aspects, especially on the west, on the north, on the northeast and on the east." Perhaps they paused briefly if conditions allowed as she endeavored to outline the image on the plate. She would thus have obtained "a magnificent succession of views as picturesque as can be imagined, and nothing

fig. 3 Eliza Greatorex. *Mont Saint-Michel*, 1887. Etching, plate 8¾ × 10⅝ in. (22.2 × 27 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Eleanor Elizabeth Greatorex and Kathleen Manor Greatorex, 1905; Transferred from the Library, 1921 (21.36.292)

can better help the study of the exterior architecture of the different edifices of the Mount."[10]

Although the term *plein air* implies that the work was done entirely in the presence of nature, the process was in fact more complex, and often involved further work when the artist returned to the studio. "Set down a thought whilst it is yet most fresh and vivid . . . give one sitting direct from nature and finish it afterwards in the house to get the work better together, always in view of the impression you received from nature," Philip Gilbert Hamerton instructed artists in *The Etcher's Handbook*. "In some respects this plan is better than going to nature several times, because if you see the subject on different days . . . there will very likely come a sort of confusion over your mind."[11] Greatorex left no explanation of her etching process, but likely followed this standard practice, mapping the overall composition *sur le motif* and finessing some of the details later back in her quarters. The technique is challenging, as etching the lines into a metal plate is unforgiving, allowing the artist only one try. But when done successfully it imparts a freshness and immediacy to the picture.

The print delineates what became one of the canonical views of Mont Saint-Michel: the northeast profile displaying the ramparts with its towers, rimming the buildings of the town below, and the entire complex topped

by the magnificent Abbey church. Many artists who portrayed the Mont from a similar distance populated it with the fishermen who made their livelihood in these waters. George Loring Brown, when he painted his *Coast of France (Mont St. Michel)* (Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York) the same year that Greatorex executed her print, enlivened the foreground with a cluster of stationary boats on the mudflats, their voluminous sails improbably unfurled. Additional genre elements including figures of the fishermen going about their chores and fishing nets laid out on the beach reference the daily life of local inhabitants. Although Greatorex undoubtedly witnessed similar details, her etching is devoid of any signs of life.

This article centers on the three rare impressions of etchings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, donated in 1905 by her two artist-daughters, Kathleen Honora Greatorex (1851–1942) and Eleanor Elizabeth Greatorex (1854–1908). They resulted from her print pilgrimage to Mont Saint-Michel early in 1887 and comprise the full view mentioned above, another detailing the town's street, and the interior of the Gallery of the Aquilon. Focusing on her pictures of this medieval complex perched atop a tidal island provides insight into her experience of this sacred site. Having emigrated from the north of Ireland while in her early twenties, she had traveled extensively in pursuit of artistic projects for the better part of four decades. In 1887 she likely set out in spring, as the guidebooks advised: "It is better to choose the occasion of the spring tides, especially when there is full moon, which permit us to go round the Mount in a boat."[12] That season would also ensure enough time to send the etchings to Boston for the exhibition of women etchers organized by Koehler, who would have invited her to participate. This trip to Normandy at age sixty-eight was destined to be one of her last major excursions, the culmination of her remarkable career. What, then, prompted Greatorex to undertake this rather arduous trip that involved maneuvering tricky tides, climbing up and down a maze of steep ancient stairways, and enduring bone-chilling winds? Her residence in Paris, after all, afforded her much easier access to medieval churches and monuments.

While Greatorex did not subscribe to a single orthodox religion, her artwork and the patterns of her life demonstrate the deep spirituality that motivated her to journey to this place and to create images that convey its meaning for her. Focusing closely on these three etchings allows us to probe the artist's response to Mont Saint-Michel at a transitional moment, when the French state began to promote the long-revered religious site as a spectacularly situated modern tourist destination. Greatorex's work embodies this shift from the sacred to the secular and conveys both its breathtaking beauty and atmosphere of deep spirituality. Comparing her work to other artists who traveled there around the same time further reinforces this point, revealing that her pictures construct spaces that welcome the viewer's entry and quiet contemplation without the clamor of everyday figures and activities that others often introduced into their pictures. Her work represents an amalgam of artistic, historic, and spiritual dynamics that continue to motivate individual travelers to Mont Saint-Michel to this day.

MIGRATION, MOBILITY, AND PILGRIMAGE

Born in the north of Ireland, Eliza Greatorex (née Pratt) emigrated to New York in the 1840s, and subsequently traveled west to Colorado and made frequent trips to Britain and Continental Europe. By 1878 she embarked to France, where she lived until her death in 1897. With Paris and Moret-sur-Loing as the base camps she shared with her daughters Kathleen and Eleanor, the trio toured much of France and Italy and spent a year in North Africa. Her pilgrimage to Mont Saint-Michel can be interpreted as an extension of her life trajectory as a migrant for whom such an act becomes a way to acquaint herself with a (new) homeland and a way of identifying meaningful anchors to that place. France experienced a surge of interest in medieval art and culture following the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71). Characterized as a time of intense piety and devotion, the Middle Ages were promoted as a palliative to the political, economic, and psychological consequences of the humiliating defeat France had suffered at the hands of the Germans. This embrace of the medieval generated historical fiction set in that moment, holidays with a focus on medieval legends, and ambitious campaigns to restore architectural monuments and artworks of the period. These efforts sparked a resurgence of pilgrimage, which embraced traditionally favored destinations as well as those newly opened at La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), Pontmain (1871), and Mont Saint-Michel's restoration and construction of the causeway (1878–80) that facilitated access to it. Religious orders promoted the growth of the pilgrimage phenomenon, bolstered by rising tourism and consumer culture. Alongside churches or shrines were the trains or other transports necessary to carry the pilgrims there as well as the hotels, restaurants, and relic-souvenir shops to

sustain them for their stay.[13] In this intersection of medievalism and pilgrimage with consumerism and tourism in late nineteenth-century France, the traveler-artist, whether painter, graphic artist, or photographer, came to play an increasingly important role.

Traveling from Paris into the countryside and along the coast, Greatorex was seeking conditions she had known growing up in rural Ireland. There her father, James Calcott Pratt, was an itinerant Methodist minister, a position that required him to frequently move his family around his circuit. Amid multiple dislocations, Eliza (and likely her siblings) identified with matriarch Catherine Scott Pratt's family home in the village of Pettigo, which she painted on several occasions. Located in remote County Donegal in the northwest of the country (close to the present-day border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland), that home was just shy of four miles from Lough Derg, Ireland's premier shrine. Difficult to access owing to wild and barren mountains, bogs, and other obstacles, it sits on Station Island, one of the approximately fifty islands in the six-mile-long lake, Lough Derg (the name derives from either *dearg* for red or *derc* for cave). Here back in the fifth century Saint Patrick was said to have stood at the mouth of the island's cave—one of the entranceways to Hell—where he witnessed the tortured souls damned for all eternity. Subsequently it became an important pilgrimage site, probably the most grueling in Europe, for it demands fasting, vigil prayers, and walking the stations or circuits barefoot around six penitential beds made up of sharp, irregular stones that pierced the flesh, leaving trails of blood. Accessible for ten weeks between June 1 and August 15, the island continues to attract pilgrims to the present day.[14] We can imagine the young Eliza in the 1820s observing the stream of people passing through their town during the summer months, likely inquiring where they were going and why. Images of these sojourners and attendant devotional testimonies became embedded in her memory and later resurfaced to spur her personal quest.

One manifestation of that impulse occurred in summer 1871. Greatorex had departed for Germany with her children in 1870, shortly before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War on July 19. They remained there and traveled for fifteen months before she decided to leave her children in Munich and do a bit of exploring on her own. She landed in Oberammergau, a rustic village in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps that since the seventeenth century has been the site of the Passion Play performed once every ten years. Afflicted by the ravages of the Thirty Years' War and spread of bubonic plague, the townspeople had vowed that if God spared them then they would perform a *Play of the Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (*Spiel vom Leiden, Sterben und Auferstehen unseres Herrn Jesus Christus*). The death rate dropped, and they kept their promise, presenting the drama each decade to the present day. The dramatic cycle, interrupted by war in 1870, continued in the summer of 1871. Upon arriving in Oberammergau and attending a performance, the artist fell under its spell and resolved to stay for the season and record the events surrounding the holy drama. "Dear Children!" she wrote to them in a letter, "We must give up all idea of our projected summer sojourn to Berchtesgaden, and you must come up here to me at once. I cannot write about what I have seen and felt to-day; but I have decided to live among these people . . . this summer, and see how their daily life accords with this marvellous religious service."[15] Residing there she produced a series of pen-and-ink drawings that illustrated her written text in her first book, *The Homes of Ober-Ammergau* (1872). Mother and children found quarters in the home of the Flunger family, who transformed themselves daily into the characters of the holy Christian drama. As Greatorex gazed out over the village of 1,200 inhabitants, she "silently prayed that the great act of devotion in which I had shared might bring me nearer to the Christ-life."[16] Her openness to their practices stands out amid the anti-Catholic prejudice so blatant in most Anglo-American travel literature. She arrived in the village troubled by the war and recent family illness that shook her faith. In one of the book's final chapters, she declares "my questioning is at an end," and that she was departing with "better trust, surer faith" than when she arrived.[17] Although we do not have the same written testimony from her at Mont Saint-Michel, she must surely have been continuing to seek confirmation of her faith there.

TOURISTS AND PILGRIMS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

"To-day a visit to the mount is a delight to be long remembered," artist Henry Bacon wrote to the readers of *The Art Amateur.* "You climb the stone stairs, which form the principal street, to the monastery, where a half day can be spent in wandering through the many rooms, beautiful in architecture and strange in their history and tradition." His account, written two years before Greatorex traveled there, is one of the growing number that helped armchair travelers negotiate the

fig. 4 Gabrielle de Veaux Clements (American, 1858–1948). *Church and Castle, Mont Saint Michel*, 1885. Etching on paper, 14 × 11 in. (35.6 × 27.9 cm). National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay

spaces without leaving home. "You go down into the dungeons, and hear from the guides the stories of those condemned to confinement there, without light and with little air, and of the iron cage that no longer exists," he continued, emphasizing the sensational aspects after Napoleon had made it a prison. "Then you climb up, up, to the top of the church, out on the roof by the 'lace staircase,' and pulling yourself along," he urged, advising: "if you wish and can find space, you write your name and address on the tiles that cover the roof."[18] This act was the ultimate tourist gesture: inscribing one's name on the monument to document that she or he had been there. Similarly in the illustrations Bacon drew to accompany his text he took pains to insert visitors in Victorian dress, wandering the streets and traversing the network of staircases and corridors threading through the stone structures. Readers were encouraged to identify with this figure, and contemplate her or his own tour. The number of visitors was rising dramatically, amounting to a "mob of tourists of many kinds of repulsiveness," as Henry Adams would complain a few years later.[19]

Adams's "mob of tourists" included growing numbers of artists from Europe and the United States who painted and sketched the site, from Théodore Rousseau and David Roberts to William Stanley Haseltine and George Loring Brown as well as Paul Signac several years later. One female artist-etcher who provides an especially apt counterpoint is Gabrielle de Veaux Clements, who had studied etching under Stephen Parrish in 1883. In 1885 she traveled to the French coast with her life companion, Ellen Day Hale, where she etched her *Church and Castle, Mont Saint-Michel* (fig. 4). Using a graphic language similar to that of Greatorex, she concentrates on the angles and patterns of the clustered architecture. This method creates the appearance of three dimensions through the use of overlapping structures, reinforcing the crowding of multiple buildings on the small island and effectively blocking our visual access. Greatorex's *Mont Saint-Michel* by contrast gives more attention to the setting and creates a space that invites the viewer to enter. Attendees of the exhibition *The Work of the Women Etchers of America* in 1887 would have had the opportunity to compare the two works. Clements exhibited twenty-one prints, three of which were made at Mont Saint-Michel.[20] Although there is no evidence of personal contact between the two women, they clearly shared a fascination with this monument and the conviction that the etched line could best capture their impressions of it.

fig. 5 Eliza Greatorex. *Rue de la Ville, Mont St Michel*, 1887. Etching with plate tone on *chine collé*, plate 6⅜ × 4¾ in. (16.2 × 12.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Eleanor Elizabeth Greatorex and Kathleen Manor Greatorex, 1905; Transferred from the Library, 1921 (21.36.293)

"The only street of the town has on each side houses some of which are still as they probably were in the middle ages," a guidebook informs us. "The greatest part of the dwellings of the old town and of the new one have always been as they are now, hostelries for pilgrims or shops where were sold the pictures or *enseignes du benoist Arcange Monsieur Saint-Michel,* and where every kind of objects of piety are still sold."[21] How was an artist to convey the character of this place in a trio of small black-and-white images? It is possible to read them as a progression, from the distant shot of Mont Saint-Michel to *Rue de la Ville* that leads us on to the main street of the town that heads up to the Abbey (fig. 5). Her chosen perspective emphasizes the rising verticality that typifies medieval engineering while confining us within a segment of its tiered design and dramatically ascending staircases to provide a sense of one's intimate personal experience. In vantage point it parallels Bacon's *In the Village of Mont Saint Michel*, with irregular steps winding past several antiquated structures. But while Bacon enlivens his scene including not only the male figure but also printed signs on the buildings and a washtub left on the street, Greatorex depicts the spaces devoid of any trace of human presence. Omitting the intrusions of modern life, she is attempting to return us to the spiritual scenery of the Middle Ages and capture the experience of the pilgrim rather than that of the tourist.

The architectural complex on the Mont was composed of edifices of different epochs, placed one over the other so that the visitor finds herself in a rather complicated labyrinth. After proceeding along the Rue de la Ville, Greatorex eventually arrived at the Abbey, represented by her in a single scene of the interior, which she referred to as the Crypt of Mont Saint-Michel, but was better known as the Gallery of the Aquilon, a name derived from the cold wind that blows from the north (fig. 6). For most of her career her motif of choice was a landscape or a building exterior, so her decision to depict this interior view here posed challenges. Surveying the surroundings, she determined to position herself opposite the staircase that she must have descended to arrive in this lower room, so that she could optimally sketch the groin vaults and the distinctive columns and capitals. Turning her etching plate vertically, she treated the surface somewhat differently from her other two prints, exploring the tonal depths of the womblike interior in a manner inspired by Rembrandt. Built toward the end of the eleventh century, this room functioned as an almonry, where the monks distributed alms to the poorer pilgrims and sheltered them for the night. Officials and more distinguished guests, by contrast, were provided with rooms above. Unlike some of the wide-open, decorated spaces of the Abbey, the almonry appeared contained and unadorned, almost fortresslike. The artist had likely consulted a travel book or even toured the site in the company of a guide and would have been aware of the room's history as a place of shelter and alms distribution for the poor. Perhaps recollections of her father's commitment as a Methodist minister to attend to the economically challenged rural Irish mingled in her mind with stories of the Abbey monks and prompted her to select this gallery for her visual interpretation. She represents the structure as a sanctuary of tranquility and harmony whose function conveyed the fundamental

fig. 6 Eliza Greatorex. *The Crypt, Mont St. Michel*, 1887. Etching with plate tone on *chine collé*, plate 7½ × 5⅜ in. (19.1 × 13.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Eleanor Elizabeth Greatorex and Kathleen Manor Greatorex, 1905; Transferred from the Library, 1921 (21.36.291)

Christian message of charity and caring for others. The strong outlines etched into the plate operate in the traditional manner as representation, while the shorter, lively strokes filling in the forms counteract as pattern.

Cumulatively the three etchings present a record of the artist's dual physical and spiritual journeys. The *Crypt* and *Rue de la Ville* are vertical pictures with stairways appearing in each one, leading us deeper into their respective spaces but cutting off access to what lies beyond. Greatorex's panorama of the island, by contrast, is larger and oriented horizontally, suggesting that it is the centerpiece of a triptych. In the manner of a religious altarpiece, she created a horizontal panel in the center, flanked by the two vertical panels of interior and exterior scenes with repeating flights of steps. Subtly but insistently these individual motifs, suggestively organizing themselves into an altarpiece-like framework, convey the blend of faith and art that Greatorex sought on her pilgrimage.

PRACTICING PLEIN-AIR ETCHING IN FRANCE, 1880–87

Greatorex demonstrated a long-standing commitment to working outdoors. She had begun her career as a landscape painter and then evolved into a graphic artist, drawing in pen and ink directly in front of her subjects to produce a series of drawings for her folio volume *Old New York: From the Battery to Bloomingdale* (1875).[22] In 1880, just after she turned sixty, she was ready to initiate a new phase. For the third and what turned out to be the final self-reinvention, she determined to pursue plein-air etching. The small, portable copper plates were the logical extension of her drawing pad and perfectly suited her needs. To seek the most expert instruction she departed New York for France, where she trained in the technique that ultimately made her a leading figure in the resuscitation of etching, what came to be known as the Etching Revival of the 1880s. She and other artists rejected the concept of reproductive printmaking and instead championed etching as a medium of creative expression, as it had been in the era of Rembrandt. Lacking opportunities to learn etching at home, Americans had to head for Europe for technical training. "Although still working in color [i.e., oil paints]," print curator Sylvester Koehler reported that she "made etching her chief study."[23] She sought personal instruction from Charles Henri Toussaint as well as Maxime Lalanne, whom Hamerton declared "the best etcher of the present day."[24] He came highly recommended by Koehler, who had translated his book of 1866, *Traité de la Gravure à l'eau-forte* (*A Treatise on Etching*), into English. Published in 1880, the translated text became the Bible of the Etching Revival from which thousands taught themselves the art of etching. Eliza likely had consulted it earlier, as she could have read it in the original French. And she would have had a preview of his work in 1876, when it was on view at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. Born in 1827, Lalanne was—like Greatorex—a painter, etcher, and author, and fashioned highly refined images of the architectural landmarks and landscape that were his characteristic subject. His expressive treatment of aging structures in his *Aux Environs de Paris* or *Vue Prise du Pont Saint-Michel* finds parallels with Greatorex's treatment of the hallowed structures of Mont Saint-Michel (fig. 7).[25] Comparing her graphics published

fig. 7 Maxime Lalanne (French, 1827–1886). *View from Pont St. Michel*, 1865. Etching, 8 × 11 9/16 in. (20.3 × 29.4 cm). Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Ralph King, the Frederick Keppel Memorial (1920.691)

in 1875 to those done in 1887 after she came under Lalanne's tutelage reveals that her use of line had become lighter and more suggestive, rather than specific and descriptive. Working on the plate, she scraped and reworked the ink to evoke a moodiness that lent an air of character to the buildings she delineated.

The *Third Annual Exhibition of Black and White Art* that opened in New York in December 1880 included five of Greatorex's prints but they are only identified as "etching," without a title or description, and seem to have generated little commentary in the press.[26] Her printmaking soon reached a wider public due to Koehler's tireless promotion of etching in the United States. Prior to featuring her work in his groundbreaking exhibition *The Work of the Women Etchers of America* in 1887, he had championed her in two seminal projects he initiated to put the medium in the United States on par with its level in Europe. The first was his short-lived but highly influential periodical, *The American Art Review: A Journal Devoted to the Practice, Theory, History and Archaeology of Art* (1879–81), published in Boston by Dana Estes and Charles E. Lauriat. He intended it as a vehicle to circulate what he termed "original painter-etchings" to differentiate them from reproductive etchings, which he regarded as mere copies of artworks in other media. Eager to make this form of printmaking better known in the United States, he aimed to stimulate artists to try their hand with the needle and collectors to create a market for their work. In *The American Art Review* of May 1881, Koehler reproduced Greatorex's *The Pond, Cernay La Ville*, with an explanation of her pioneering contribution to American printmaking (fig. 8).[27] Five hundred impressions were made in a limited edition (sometimes assumed to be a twentieth-century marketing device but already used in the nineteenth century). Thin Japanese paper is laid down on the inked surface of the plate, then evenly dusted with powdered paste. The backing sheet is laid on top, then all is run through an intaglio press, in a process known as *chine collé*, producing especially beautiful results. The inclusion of *The Pond* in this handsome volume undoubtedly led to the work becoming her most familiar image.

The small print was a product of a trip Greatorex made in summer to France's Chevreuse Valley, where she was etching directly from nature.[28] Replacing her paint box with portable metal etching plates and needles, she explored the countryside. Although she originally learned etching to reproduce her pen-and-inks, she discovered it to be an expressive medium that became central to her artistic practice. Cernay-la-Ville, a rural village about forty miles southwest of Paris in Picardy, was a favorite haunt of artists. They were attracted there for scenery, easy access to Paris, and inexpensive and congenial accommodations including the Léopold Inn where Impressionist Auguste Renoir made a mural sketch that the proprietor accepted in lieu of payment, and everyone from Camille Corot to Winslow Homer was said to have contributed to its decoration.[29] The town's environs featured a cascade, a church, and a pond, each of which Greatorex featured in individual etchings.[30] Her rural foray yielded six works: three scenes at Chevreuse and three of Cernay-la-Ville including *The Pond*, a quiet, unassuming view of the water's edge with a glimpse across the marsh grass to the far shore. The picture surface, by contrast, is highly animated with a varied treatment of line that demonstrates far greater freedom than her drawings of old New York. She signed the plate "Eliza Greatorex, Cernay-la-Ville 1880" and exhibited it at the Paris Salon the following spring.[31]

The story of how Greatorex's work came to Koehler's attention tells us something of the modus operandi of the late nineteenth-century transatlantic art scene. On a visit to France in 1880, Greatorex's sister, Matilda Pratt Despard, saw her new work and sent a plate home to her son, Walter Despard. Acting as her agent, Walter, by early December of that year, was negotiating with Koehler to insert his aunt's work into this prestigious publication. "At the kind suggestion of Mr. S. P. Avery, to whom I am indebted for your address," he wrote to Estes and Lauriat, "I have sent

fig. 8 Eliza Greatorex. *The Pond, Cernay La Ville,* 1880. Etching, 7¾ × 5½ in. (19.7 × 14 cm). Private collection

you today per Adams Express a pkge containing four etchings by Mrs. Eliza Greatorex, the plates of which are for sale, and may be accepted for your American Art Review." As a precaution he added: "Should this not be the case please return the etchings at my expense." He must have received a positive response and wrote again: "Feeling assured that your offer for The Pond represents its full commercial value, I take pleasure in accepting it, and shall send the plate tomorrow." The following day he finalized the arrangements: "I now beg to advise you of having sent you the plate of Mrs. Greatorex's etching The Pond, Cernay-la-ville, per Adams Express. Kindly make check to my orders and oblige."[32]

Koehler also mounted the landmark *Exhibition of American Etchings* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where he was its first print curator. The exhibition ran from April 11 to May 9, 1881, and featured works by one hundred American artists, only seven of whom were women: Eliza Greatorex, Mary Louise McLaughlin, Anna Lea Merritt, Annette Parmentier Moran, Mary Nimmo Moran, Frances Osborne, and Mattie Scudder. Greatorex submitted nine works: four etchings of familiar places in New York and Oberammergau and five from her recent forays into the French countryside.[33] In his catalogue essay Koehler argued that "with the decline of interest in the subject," American art entered a new phase in 1876, when "the individuality of the artist gains in importance." He predicted that etching, "the most personal of the multiplying arts," would play a key role in this next phase of creative expression as "more attention is paid to the pictorial qualities of art,—to color and to effects of light and shade. And as etching is such a magician in the expression of these qualities, it stands to reason that it should be most highly valued when they are esteemed of first importance."[34] While many of her Hudson River contemporaries continued painting familiar motifs in the same comfortable style, Greatorex had reinvented herself once more and this exhibition marked her coming of age as an etcher. "I am very happy to know that the Exhibition of work of American etchers is so successful," Matilda Pratt Despard wrote to Koehler, "and greatly indebted to your kind thought in securing my sister's work a representation in it."[35]

CONCLUSION: ARCHANGEL, PILGRIM, AND PRINT

This spectacular coastal site straddling Normandy and Brittany was dedicated to Saint Michael, one of the archangels, who stood ready to slay Satan with his sword. Michael's unique status as an archangel-saint meant that he could not be venerated through either physical relics or a written *vita*. Yet the scholarship on

the medieval cult of saints tells us that the physical remains of the holy dead, miraculously preserved and channeling heavenly powers, were the engines that drove the great European pilgrimage centers. Untouched by the cycle of death and resurrection in which the communion of human saints participated, the bodiless archangel could not supply corporeal relics for veneration at his shrine, as was the norm with medieval hagiography. Archangel Michael was, in other words, a problematic intercessor for most pilgrims. Although his lack of relics frustrated the need of many for devotional intermediaries, his malleability might have been what attracted Greatorex to his shrine. Church fathers struggled to present a non-human figure in terms of humanity-based ideas of sainthood, prompting a rethinking of texts, images, and spaces. The crypt Greatorex had limned for her etching was one such space, modeled after a historic grotto. Tightly linking Saint Michael with specific terrestrial locales made it possible for Mont Saint-Michel to become not only the home of the archangel, but also a portal between heaven and earth, God and man. His presence was mapped onto his sanctuary with sightings of the fiery "brightness of Saint Michael," a fire that settled upon the Abbey periodically.[36] Symbolic spaces, unearthly fire and light, and obdurate architecture that survived wars and the forces of nature: these were the elements to which Greatorex responded, far more congenial to her than the stories of pious earthly lives and physical relics that inspired most in their religious sojourns. In her three plein-air etchings done at Mont Saint-Michel, her graphic touch is lively, her treatment of line and form conferring a sense of animation to the structure. Reducing the monumental site to fit the diminutive scale of the etchings, she created souvenirs of her highly personal pilgrimage.[37]

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NOTES

1 My book *Restless Enterprise: The Art and Life of Eliza Pratt Greatorex* (2020) provides background and references.
2 For critical debates, see Schmid 2014, 3–5.
3 Naylor 1973, 1:360. The etching is currently unlocated.
4 The eleven European subjects exhibited by Greatorex in the Museum of Fine Arts 1887 show are listed as follows: *View of Florence from Maiano, Italy*, 1886; *Villa Panattoni, Maiano, Italy*, 1886; *Clock Tower, Vallombrosa, Italy*, 1886; *Palace of the Caesars, Rome, Italy,* 1887; *St. Peter's, Rome, Italy*, 1887; *San Carlo, Rome, Italy*, 1887; *Cornice Road, Italy,* 1887; *Mont St. Michel, Brittany, France*, 1887; *The Crypt, Mont St. Michel, Brittany, France*, 1887; *Rue de la Ville, Mont St. Michel, Brittany, France*, 1887; *St. Malo from Paramé, Brittany, France,* 1887.
5 Turner and Turner 1978, xxix–lx.
6 Corroyer 1883, 1–20.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 35.
9 For an explanation of how etchings are made, see https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/Collection-Areas/drawings-and-prints/materials-and-techniques/printmaking/etching.
10 Corroyer 1883, 35.
11 Hamerton 1871, 48; quoted in Vittoria 2016, 238.
12 Corroyer 1883, 35.
13 Lachapelle 2020, 40.
14 See McGrath 1989 and Dewsnap 2008.
15 Greatorex 1872, 5.
16 Ibid., 6.
17 Ibid., 40.
18 B[acon] 1885, 26.
19 Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, September 25, 1895, in Ford 1930–38, 2:87.
20 Clements's work included *Up the Steps, Mont St. Michel*; *Norman Stair Tower, Mont St. Michel*; and *Church and Castle, Mont St. Michel*. See Museum of Fine Arts 1887, 8.
21 Corroyer 1883, 42, 44.
22 Greatorex 1875.
23 Koehler 1881.
24 "Etching," *New York Times*, February 23, 1881, 6.
25 For more on the work of Lalanne, see Villet 2016.
26 Salmagundi Sketch Club 1880, nos. 153, 171, 186, 189, 212.
27 Koehler 1881.
28 In spring 1862 she had exhibited the following sketches done on an earlier trip to the site at the National Academy of Design in New York, both for sale: *La Madelaine Chevreuse-France* (2) and *Study in the Valley of Chevreuse* (381). See Naylor 1973, 1:359–60.
29 Gould 1962, 93.
30 Vintage postcards are useful visual sources for these picturesque sites.
31 *Cernay-la-Ville (Seine-et-Oise)*, an engraving shown at the 1881 Paris Salon (no. G4696). See Fink 1990, 348.
32 Walter and Matilda Despard's letters, 1880–1881, Box 2, Folder 2, Sylvester R. Koehler Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
33 They included the following: 163. *Near the Theatre, Oberammergau*; 164. *Church of Oberammergau*; 165. *Old Dutch Church, Long the Post Office, New York*; 166. *The Battery, New York, in Winter;* 167. *Chevreuse, Seine et Oise*; 168.

Chevreuse, Seine et Oise; 169. *Church, Cernay-la-Ville*; 170. *The Cascade, Cernay-la-Ville;* 171. *The Pond, Cernay-la-Ville* (*American Art Review*) $2.00.

34 Koehler in Museum of Fine Arts 1881, 13.

35 Matilda Despard to S. R. Koehler, April 16, 1881, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

36 Smith 2004, 304–8.

37 The question arises whether Greatorex might have intended to print these images in multiples for distribution to fellow pilgrims, but few impressions survive to support this possibility. Ill health plagued her in the late 1880s, shortly after her travels in northern France, and continued until her death in 1897. These circumstances likely curtailed the production and promotion of the prints.

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Race, Nationalism, and Artistic Agency in *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* by Yasuo Kuniyoshi

SASHA NICHOLAS

In the winter of 1925, Yasuo Kuniyoshi captivated New York audiences with the public debut of his enigmatic painting *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* (fig. 1). Born in Okayama, Japan, in 1889, Kuniyoshi was a prominent member of interwar American modernist circles, earning acclaim for his moody landscapes and quirky figurative subjects rendered in an umbrous palette and crisply flattened forms. Though the figures in his compositions were rarely specific individuals, Kuniyoshi produced four self-portraits over the course of his career: after an early, tentative foray into the genre in 1918, he portrayed himself twice in the 1920s and once more in 1943.[1] He painted *Self-Portrait as a Photographer*, the second of these self-representations, in 1924, as he arrived at his mature styleand his career began to flourish. By 1924, the

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fig. 1 Yasuo Kuniyoshi (American, b. Japan, 1889–1953). *Self-Portrait as a Photographer*, 1924. Oil on canvas, 20½ × 30¼ in. (52.1 × 76.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1982 (1984.433.11)

thirty-five-year-old artist had already exhibited in several solo exhibitions at the Daniel Gallery, one of New York's most important venues for American modernism following the 1917 closure of 291, the pioneering gallery operated by photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Kuniyoshi was also showing, by this time, with several vanguard artist associations and in surveys of international modernism, where he was featured alongside prominent figures ranging from Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso to George Bellows and Georgia O'Keeffe.

Self-Portrait as a Photographer defies what one would expect from a painter experiencing such successes in the years after World War I. Rather than foreground his painterly prowess or otherwise bolster his emerging career, the composition shows Kuniyoshi in his decidedly less glamorous "side gig" as a photographer. To augment his meager income in the early 1920s, he had taught himself to use a camera and devoted his daytime hours to shooting works of art for galleries and collectors, focusing on his own work in the evenings. In the self-portrait, Kuniyoshi appears to be photographing a framed landscape, perhaps even one of his own works, which he said served as his "models" as he learned the practice of photographing art.[2] Indeed, the natural scene, dominated by a central, free-floating tree, appears in the artist's characteristic abstracted style. And yet, as Kuniyoshi scholar Tom Wolf has observed, the conception of the landscape in *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* seems intentionally ambiguous. The frame around the pastoral scene resembles fenestral molding, inviting viewers to read it as a live landscape seen from a window, while its grisaille tonalities suggest a photographic image.[3] The staggered diagonal lines below the frame create further spatial uncertainty; they look like floorboards or wall paneling but remain unresolved. Adding to the painting's mysteriousness is the artist's pose. Kuniyoshi depicts himself holding the shutter release of the large folding camera on his left and wearing a black hood, probably a tool to assist his concentration on the photographic act. Yet he turns his face away from his camera and looks askance, directing a severe sidelong gaze at something or someone behind him, outside the image. Most curiously, he arcs his right arm over his head and points his index

finger back at the landscape, directing the viewer toward the natural scene even as he looks away.

Self-Portrait as a Photographer made its first public appearance—under the more laconic title *Self-Portrait*—on the entryway wall of Kuniyoshi's solo exhibition at the Daniel Gallery in January 1925, effectively introducing the young artist to his audience. Critics took notice. Nearly every reviewer, piqued by what was likely Kuniyoshi's first exhibition of a work featuring an explicitly Japanese figure, wrote about the striking depiction of the artist "draped like an Eastern monk with dark cloth thrown back."[4] *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* was reproduced in at least three reviews, a rare event in a period when publications were just beginning to include images of artworks.[5] Scofield Thayer, the sophisticated editor and benefactor of the avant-garde magazine *The Dial*, purchased the painting directly from the exhibition.[6] Two months later, in March 1925, Thayer overrode his customary emphasis on European modernism and printed an image of his new acquisition in *The Dial*. An accompanying review by Henry McBride, one of the era's most perspicacious American critics, declared the self-portrait the best work in the show. McBride appraised it as an expression of the artist's essential Japaneseness; the painting, he wrote, "seems to recall all the people who ever wore hoods in Japanese art. You remember those people just sauntering out into the snow in Japanese prints? . . . Those are the relatives Kuniyoshi now unconsciously admits. It is as neat an instance of atavism as one could wish."[7] Other critics, responding to the composition's puzzling details, saw the work as embodying a fundamental disconnect between American and Japanese mindsets. As one remarked, "In the same way that the Western mind cannot understand the subtleties of Eastern music, so the Western mind may not be able to understand the subtleties of [Kuniyoshi's] Eastern humor."[8]

If *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* hinted at Kuniyoshi's unusual creative ambitions, it also spoke to a pivotal moment for Japanese Americans.[9] In May 1924, the United States Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act, the final and most restrictive in a series of national anti-immigration bills. Rising anxieties about demographic and social change—bolstered by post–World War I isolationism, the 1919–20 Red Scare, and census results showing foreign-born citizens surpassing native-born citizens whose families had lived in the country for generations—fueled rising racial nationalism in the United States throughout the early 1920s. The eugenics movement, spearheaded by academics like Princeton University psychology professor Carl Brigham (who also developed the Scholastic Aptitude Test that debuted in 1926), disseminated the pseudoscientific theory that non-Nordic immigrants diluted the "American race," while popular books like Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920) forewarned a global struggle between "white" and "dark" races. As a result, the early 1920s saw a reordering of racial hierarchies based on color rather than national origins, with all immigrants who were not Anglo-Saxon grouped together under the "dark" races Stoddard warned against.[10] A watershed in this nativist upsurge, the Johnson-Reed Act aimed to preserve white Anglo-American homogeneity through draconian quotas on immigration from areas outside northwestern Europe. "America must be kept American," declared President Calvin Coolidge upon signing the act, which would shape national immigration for decades to come.[11]

One of the key provisions in the legislation pointedly targeted new and existing Japanese immigrants. Though nineteenth-century laws already limited entry from China and other regions of Asia, Japan enjoyed an exceptional status under the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, which signaled the nation's special friendship with the United States. The Johnson-Reed Act, often called the "Japanese Exclusion Act" by both its proponents and detractors, abruptly disallowed any further Japanese immigration, building on a 1922 ruling that had barred Japanese-born individuals already in the United States like Kuniyoshi from citizenship. Driving these punitive new restrictions were anxieties about job security—particularly on the West Coast, where a Japanese-born labor force filled demand for agricultural workers—as well as the belief that Japanese immigrants threatened democratic society (understood by exclusionists to be inherently white). V. S. McClatchy, a California newspaper owner and leader of the exclusion campaign, testified to Congress: "Of all the races ineligible to citizenship under our law, the Japanese are the least assimilable and the most dangerous to our country."[12]

Painted the same year that the Johnson-Reed Act was debated and passed into law, *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* invites consideration in relation to Kuniyoshi's paradoxical experience as a celebrated American artist for whom the strictures and discriminatory conditions of the exclusion era were inescapable. By 1924, Kuniyoshi's life and career were already defined by disjunctive contrasts—between unprecedented opportunity and virulent racism, professional success and arduous labor, convivial community and

social marginalization. Kuniyoshi had arrived in the United States in 1906, at age sixteen, with little money and, in his words, only "a few monosyllables" of English.[13] Like many of his countrypeople in this period, he initially found work in the harsh conditions of California's agricultural fields, but unlike most, he later made his way to New York, worked his way through multiple art schools, and built a storied career as one of the nation's foremost painters. At mid-century, Kuniyoshi would be honored as the first living artist to receive a solo show at the Whitney Museum of American Art (1948), voted by *Look* magazine readers as one of America's top three painters (1948), and selected to represent the United States in the Venice Biennale (1952).

Such accolades—remarkable for any artist—were even more so given the mainstream art world's proclivity to sideline non-white practitioners during these years. Yet Kuniyoshi's fame did little to prevent the indignities he faced as a Japanese American. Rebuffed in his continual efforts to attain American citizenship, he remained a "resident alien" in his adopted country for nearly five decades. When he married fellow artist Katherine Schmidt in 1919, she was shunned by her family and forced by law to relinquish her own citizenship. Even in the late 1940s, as Kuniyoshi racked up awards and honors, President Harry S. Truman dismissed his work in fiercely racialized terms: "if that's art," he sneered, "I'm a Hottentot."[14]

Self-Portrait as a Photographer instantly became one of Kuniyoshi's most iconic works and has enjoyed that status ever since. Reflecting on the painting's memorable debut in a 1934 article, *The Art News* critic Laurie Eglington asserted that the "well known self-portrait . . . epitomizes the artist's finest expression."[15] The painting is featured in every significant study of Kuniyoshi's art and appears regularly in the galleries at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where Thayer bequeathed it in 1982. In his 2011 publication on Kuniyoshi's work, art historian ShiPu Wang describes the self-portrait as "a pictorial investigation of his artistic identity during the formative years of his career," rightly recognizing it as the artist's conscious effort to "figure (act) out what kind of artist he wanted to be" and, one might add, how he wished to be seen by others.[16] Yet the peculiar premise of the self portrait—Kuniyoshi's decision to paint himself working as a photographer—has gone largely unexplored.[17] While the artist's early audiences heralded the painting's apparent "Japaneseness," moreover, no one in Kuniyoshi's lifetime, and few scholars and critics since, seems to have connected his creation and presentation of his first mature self-portrait to the nativist immigration politics of the moment in which it was made.[18] Supported by new archival research, this article offers a fresh examination of *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* and situates this complex work within the dynamics of Kuniyoshi's nascent career, the rapidly changing art world of the United States in the 1920s, and the era's fraught ethnoracial discourses.

SELF-REPRESENTATION AND BELONGING

In approaching the creative self as subject, *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* testifies to a broader interwar trend: the proliferation of self-portraiture among American artists. The years after World War I witnessed the emergence of a national popular culture fostered by a profusion of mass-media imagery and an optimistic patriotism born of the country's growing prominence as an international power. These phenomena thrust American artists into the public eye as never before and presented novel opportunities for self-promotion. Thanks to wartime advances in printing technology, photographs of famous figures, including artists, and reproductions of artworks began to appear routinely on the pages of newspapers and magazines. With the rise of American global power and popular culture came a vigorous new spirit of cultural nationalism. Art historian Wanda Corn has extensively documented how artists working in the post–World War I decade charged themselves with the portentous goal of developing an authentic, distinctly American art: "the Great American Thing."[19] Through portraiture, they embarked on a parallel quest to define what it meant to be a modern American artist. Increasingly self-assured and less beholden to European models, artists used self-portraiture to advance multiple, at times conflicting, visions of American creative identity. In a popular culture newly focused on celebrity—from silent film stars to heroic athletes—the self-portrait represented an opportunity to invent a distinctive public persona and command audience attention. The canny placement of *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* in the entryway of Kuniyoshi's 1925 exhibition, whether decided by the artist or a collaborator, bespeaks an awareness of these possibilities.

If the idea of what constituted a modern American artist was fluid and up for grabs, it was especially so for those American artists whose race, ethnicity, or gender had excluded them from mainstream careers before World War I. In the war's aftermath, artists of color, including Asian American artists like Kuniyoshi, rose to

acclaim in unprecedented (if still modest) numbers, defying the era's nativist drumbeat. The abstract experiments of the century's first two decades, including the art of the Stieglitz circle and European modernists whose work percolated into New York, privileged a white, male model of artisthood—a figure who embodied brash autonomy and creative freedom. For artists like Kuniyoshi who did not fit this ideal, figurative strategies were particularly fruitful, allowing them to claim space in the era's increasingly visual culture.

Art historian and theorist John Tagg describes the portrait as "a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity."[20] Because there was no received lexicon of imagery representing American artists of Japanese descent, Kuniyoshi's self-portrait carried momentous potential to inscribe his identity as a social and cultural stakeholder in his adopted country. In the postwar decades, art historians, influenced by critic Clement Greenberg's strident campaign to define formalist abstraction as modernism's unifying framework, would overlook the vital role of figuration in both American and European interwar art.[21] (Greenberg himself dismissed Kuniyoshi as an artist who "hardly matters to serious painting in America.")[22] For Kuniyoshi and many of his contemporaries, however, figuration was not a regressive evasion of modernity but, as Wang proposes, a "modernist strategy in engaging cultural and ideological discourses . . . from the perspective of an Other."[23] In the figure, these artists found a means for processing national transformations, exploring the self as something to be created and performed, and advancing progressive agendas—ambitions we might now appraise as distinctly modernist.

In considering how *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* engaged 1920s debates about race, national identity, and belonging, this article builds on the groundbreaking efforts of art historians over the last two decades to study the many ways American artists who were marked as racial "others" confronted such discourses.[24] Mary Ann Calo has extensively documented the embrace by the interwar American art world of prejudicial "assumptions about differences in human character and personal creativity as ascribed to race, ethnicity, and national origin," which followed the period's broader societal endeavor to systematize ethnoracial categories that were in fact unstable and culturally determined.[25] In practice, this meant the art world celebrated work by "racial artists" as expressions of innate, stereotypically primitive essences rather than individual identities and aesthetic choices. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that critics configured Kuniyoshi's work as "atavistically" Japanese while simultaneously overlooking his intentional activism on behalf of Japanese American artists.[26] Leading interwar critics like McBride, Eglington, and Forbes Watson interpreted Kuniyoshi's work as a fanciful and idiosyncratic fusion of his innate Japanese character and Western experiences, neutralizing its potentially disquieting or subversive implications. Audiences at Kuniyoshi's 1925 show, McBride speculated, "will probably rub their eyes and wonder if they are in Japan, Maine, or Mars."[27] Eglington, in turn, described *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* as an expression of the artist's "lovable" and self-deprecating sense of humor, a "trait which often lies unsuspected beneath the calm façade of his countrymen."[28] Other critics echoed more insidious stereotypes, aligning Kuniyoshi's art with themes of incursion and violence that evoked the trope of the "yellow peril," the racist fear that Asian immigrants would overtake American society. The *New Yorker* review of the artist's 1925 exhibition, for example, described him as possessing "a great strength, a great facility, and a bitterness against the Occident that would make the Hearst press arm for an immediate Japanese invasion."[29]

Subjected to these essentializing formulas, Kuniyoshi perpetually encountered challenges to his eligibility as an American artist. When he was included in the seminal *Paintings by Nineteen Living Americans* exhibition at the newly opened Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1929, numerous critics protested that his "Oriental endowment and psychology, with no appreciable relation to Occidental art" made him unfit for the exhibition.[30] After MoMA purchased one of his works from the show, a member of the museum's acquisition committee similarly derided his work as "Oriental painting in the Western manner at its worst."[31] According to Watson, Kuniyoshi found those who questioned his American credentials "exceedingly irritating," but in public he walked a careful ideological tightrope.[32] He made sure to assert a conscious knowledge of Japanese art (lest he be seen as an unwitting primitive) but doggedly identified his aesthetic and spiritual roots in the United States rather than his native country. Rebutting his critics, he insisted his work exemplified the lively hybridity of all modern American art, which he defined as a "conglomeration of customs and traditions of many peoples."[33]

Though period audiences often viewed Kuniyoshi through the fixed lens of "racial art," his work held the potential to undermine such terms of engagement. As

fig. 2 John Steuart Curry (American, 1897–1946). *Self-portrait*, 1927–29. Oil on canvas, 36 × 30 in. (91.4 × 76.2 cm). Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Museum purchase: Friends of the Art Museum, the Students of the University of Kansas, the Price R. and Flora A. Reid Foundation, Maupintour, Inc., Margaret and Darwin Daicoff, Mr. and Mrs. Robert G. Braden, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Barber, and Mr. Stan E. Wisdom (1985.0023)

Wang argues, Kuniyoshi and other interwar Japanese American artists such as Miki Hayakawa and Eitarō Ishigaki used their paintings as a "productive and intercultural sites where . . . [they] dealt with encounters of difference, relations of power, and formulations of their identities as they traversed national, racial, and ideological boundaries."[34] Experiences of race and racism significantly impacted their creative identities—that is to say, how they defined their ambitions and values as artists—and were not simply "some outward force that, after being described and historized, can be left to the side," to quote art historian Anthony W. Lee.[35] As someone who strove to assimilate and prove his Americanness, Kuniyoshi was indignant at his adopted country for refusing to make him one of its own and at the critics for insisting his work was fundamentally Japanese. "I can't be very much Oriental," he argued, "I have spent most of my life here. I have been educated here and I have suffered here. I am as much of an individual as anyone—except that I have Oriental blood in my veins."[36]

Kuniyoshi rarely addressed these subjects explicitly in his art and instead clarified his beliefs through a career-long commitment to activism. In the 1920s, he counteracted the nation's discriminatory policies by participating in organizations that promoted Japanese artists; in the 1930s, he served as secretary of the left-wing American Artists' Congress; in the 1940s, he contributed to the Japanese American Committee for Democracy and became the first president of the Artists Equity Association. At the time he painted *Self-Portrait as a Photographer*, Kuniyoshi had recently joined several progressive organizations aimed at promoting a more expansive American art world, including the Japanese Artists Association, the Whitney Studio Club, the Society of Independent Artists, and the Penguin Club. These groups may have encouraged Kuniyoshi's thinking about art as a springboard for social and cultural visibility—perhaps even prompting him to turn to his own image in 1924. For an artist who favored the allusive over the explicitly political, this moment of introspection engendered an opportunity to invoke the distinct forces that shaped his life and career in America.

"AMERICAN SOIL"

Self-Portrait as a Photographer centers around several intellectual and perceptual conundrums. Kuniyoshi's emphasis on his mundane day job was a bewildering strategy of self-portrayal for an artist working to establish his reputation as a painter, particularly in a period when photography was largely dismissed as a commercial endeavor rather than a fine art. Many of Kuniyoshi's painter friends who also practiced photography during these years, including Ben Shahn, Reginald Marsh, and Charles Sheeler, opted to hide or minimize this aspect of their work. And most young American painters who produced self-portraits in the post–World War I decade used the genre to trumpet their painterly abilities. In 1927–29, for example, thirty-year-old John Steuart Curry depicted himself in a modern redux of *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1524) by the Italian Renaissance master Parmigianino (fig. 2). Filling Curry's canvas is a mirror image in which the artist looms over the viewer from his perch in a chair, paintbrushes in hand. By alluding to Parmagianino's masterpiece and showing himself at work on a Rubensian composition, Curry demonstrated his virtuoso knowledge of a European painterly canon, while his checked shirt and messy hair convey his Midwestern American folksiness. In a parallel effort, the young Chinese American painter Yun Gee produced a series of self-portraits in the mid-1920s using hatched planes of nonassociative color inspired by Cubism and the

Synchromist experiments of his San Francisco teacher, Otis Oldfield (see fig. 3). Gee's stylish hunting cap, jacket, and tie suggest a desire to embrace 1920s American glamour, while his skillful integration of Western modernism with his own visage challenged stereotypical readings of his art, like those Kuniyoshi faced, as inherently "Oriental."[37]

If Gee and Curry hoped to elevate their nascent careers and impress audiences by fusing revered European painterly precedents with American self-styling, Kuniyoshi's foregrounding of his photographic day job instead recalls the humble, contingent, and often peripatetic conditions of his early years in the United States, described by the artist as his "lonely wanderings."[38] Before arriving at photography, he supported his artistic pursuits through daytime work as a field laborer, a porter, and a janitor, menial positions commonly held by the era's Japanese immigrants. Kuniyoshi later remarked that picking sweet grapes in California's agricultural fields, where thousands of Japanese workers faced exploitation, suffering, and death, conjured contrasting memories of pleasure and pain that he channeled into his many still lifes of the fruit.[39] When he turned to photography in 1919, he continued his bifurcated work pattern, but now in a job he found less tedious and degrading. "Photography agreed with me," he remarked, "for I learned quickly and . . . received commissions."[40] In the 1930s, the advent of the portable Leica 35 mm camera would inspire Kuniyoshi to engage creatively with photography in hundreds of images taken around New York City.[41] But at the time of his 1924 self-portrait, he seems to have regarded the medium as a financial necessity rather than an imaginative vocation. His close friend, painter Alexander Brook, characterized it as a burdensome distraction: "Going from place to place lugging his camera and other necessary photographic paraphernalia consumed too much of Yas's time and energy."[42]

fig. 3 Yun Gee (American, b. China, 1906–1963). *Head of Man in Cap*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 19 × 15 in. (48.3 × 38.1 cm). Private collection

Rather than portraying himself as the weary, time-stretched artist described by Brook, however, Kuniyoshi suffused *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* with tense energy. Turning toward the viewer, he invites us to examine his serious expression, especially his downturned, mustachioed mouth and piercing gaze. The composition's close-up intensity distinguishes it from a self-portrait painted by his friend Ben Shahn, which is equally unusual in its disclosure of the artist's identity as a painter-photographer. In his 1939 *Self-Portrait Among Churchgoers,* Shahn stealthily photographs a group of black-clad churchgoers shuffling past him on a busy sidewalk (fig. 4). Like Kuniyoshi, Shahn was often a target of ethnoracial discrimination—in his case, as a Lithuanian Jewish immigrant—and he painted *Self-Portrait Among Churchgoers* to critique what he saw as the hypocritical piety of Christian groups who had censored his work.[43] With his camera covering his face and back turned to the churchgoers, Shahn initially seems like a secondary character who is about to wander out of the scene. It is only when we notice the round eye of his angled viewfinder, secretly pointed at the group (or possibly at us, the viewers), that we understand his hidden agenda. If Shahn turned his outsider status into one of voyeuristic power, Kuniyoshi played up his "otherness" through the assertive monumentality of his body and the performative drama of his dark hood and forceful gesture. He echoed this sensibility in a linocut advertisement he produced for his photography business in the early to mid-1920s (fig. 5). Rendered in a whimsical, folk-inspired style, the print shows a male photographer standing with his camera in a New England coastal landscape complete with a sailboat and spouting whale. The setting is incongruous with the photographer's fancy dress and outsize physique, as well as the advertising copy that describes Kuniyoshi as a Brooklyn-based photographer of paintings and sculptures. The figure raises his right index figure in what may be a signal that he is about to pull the shutter

fig. 4 Ben Shahn (American, b. Lithuania, 1898–1969). *Self-Portrait Among Churchgoers*, 1939. Tempera on board, 20 × 29½ in. (50.8 × 74.9 cm). Promised Gift to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas

release, suggesting a clue to Kuniyoshi's corresponding gesture in *Self-Portrait as a Photographer*.

While Shahn envisions himself as a furtive photographer capturing social truths, Kuniyoshi—in both *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* and his contemporaneous advertising image—portrays his photographer-self as a conspicuous curiosity. This was a reference, perhaps, to his own rarity in the American art world, where he was the most recognized among a scant number of Japanese American artists, not to mention in 1920s New York, where the Japanese population was around two thousand in a city of seven million. Historian Daniel H. Inouye writes that unlike on the West Coast where Japanese immigrants settled in large numbers, in New York Japanese people were perceived as novelties and mostly lived "below the radar," with very little sense of community.[44] This tension between visibility and marginalization plays out in depictions of Kuniyoshi by artist friends during this period. In Alexander Calder's *Firemen's Dinner for Brancusi*, a painting of the raucous last meeting of the Penguin Club, Kuniyoshi seems the odd man out; peeking out from under the arm of a gesticulating partygoer, his round spectacles are unmistakable, but he is the only figure who neither participates in

fig. 5 Yasuo Kuniyoshi. Kuniyoshi Photographs advertisement with a drawing of a photographer on a beach, ca. 1925. Linocut. Dorothea S. Greenbaum papers, 1923–1980. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

fig. 6 Alexander Calder (American, 1898–1976). *Firemen's Dinner for Brancusi,* ca. 1926. Oil on burlap, 36 × 42⅛ in. (91.4 × 107 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, gift of the artist (63.58). Kuniyoshi appears in the middle right of the composition. He is seated and wears round spectacles.

fig. 7 Peggy Bacon (American, 1895–1987). *The Ardent Bowlers*, 1932. Drypoint, 6 × 13 15/16 in. (15.2 × 35.4 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchase (32.85)

fig. 8 Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Katherine Schmidt in Ogunquit, Maine. Photograph, undated (ca. 1919–24). Yasuo Kuniyoshi papers, 1906–2016. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

the group's escapades nor converses with another attendee (fig. 6). Peggy Bacon's *The Ardent Bowlers*, a caricature of Whitney Studio Club members carousing at a bowling alley, also represents Kuniyoshi as an intriguing but peripheral presence (fig. 7). Instantly recognizable, he reclines in a chair at the group's farthest edges, smoking a pipe and drifting off into space. *Self-Portrait as Photographer* elicits a similar interplay between the artist's striking physicality and enigmatic solitude. Yet in his own image, Kuniyoshi eschews the art-world fringes where Calder and Bacon placed him, as well as the voyeuristic invisibility that was a self-selected guise for Shahn but an unlikely possibility for a Japanese New Yorker. With his hood accentuating his solemn features, Kuniyoshi embraced a "new, self-conscious 'to-be-looked-at-ness'"—to borrow the words of art historian Huey Copeland—that seems to recognize his status as an ethnoracial novelty while also asserting control over the conditions shaping his image.[45]

The confrontational tone of *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* is inseparable from Kuniyoshi's figurative aesthetic of the mid-1920s. In what was likely an effort to problematize reductive period interpretations of his style as inherently Japanese, Kuniyoshi emphasized the historical American sources of his adumbral palette and spare figurative approach.[46] In the early 1920s, he became a catalyzing figure among the many artists who turned to overlooked examples of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American art as the springboard for a distinctly national modernism. During summer residencies in Ogunquit, Maine, from 1919 to 1924, Kuniyoshi began collecting folk art; in February 1924, he lent two works to the Whitney Studio Club's pioneering exhibition *Early American Art*.[47] Two months later, he curated a Whitney Studio Club exhibition focused on modern portraiture, featuring artists from Henri Matisse and Raoul Dufy to George Ault and Walt Kuhn. Kuniyoshi's engagement with the twin subjects of folk art and portraiture in early 1924 arguably inspired his shift that year to paintings of close-up, frontally styled figures reminiscent of early American limner portraits. A photograph from Ogunquit shows Kuniyoshi at work on a canvas with Schmidt as his model, but he has transformed her features into a quirky folk-inflected portrait, heightened by the addition of the figure's hat and prim collar as well as a church steeple behind her (fig. 8). With its purposeful awkwardness, shallow spatial conception, and fusion of naturalism and fantasy, S*elf-Portrait as a Photographer* similarly exemplifies the artist's desire to reinvent early American portraiture through a modernist lens.

Kuniyoshi's fascination with this idea likely sprang from growing cultural interest in portraiture as a touchstone of national expression. New efforts to showcase eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American art in the 1920s—including the Whitney's folk art exhibition and the avid collecting among Kuniyoshi's circle as well as the 1924 opening of The Met's American Wing—highlighted the genre's distinct role in the early formulation of national identity. Whether depictions of wealthy businessmen and their families or the more modest middle-class subjects painted by itinerant limners, portraits were the most popular art form of the colonial period and proliferated with the rise of American democracy, as they offered "an index of the state of American individualism rather than just a means for marking the attainments of public or civic heroes."[48] The genre's importance not only in the democratic elevation of the individual but also in situating the artist as a key player in national life was perhaps especially resonant for Kuniyoshi. With their virtuoso realism and self-styled worldliness, masters of early American portraiture such as John Singleton Copley, Gilbert Stuart, and Charles Willson Peale made themselves into exemplars of national values, rejecting the traditional artisan status of painters and "redefin[ing] their activity as a gentlemanly and liberal art," according to art historian Susan Rather.[49]

Self-Portrait as a Photographer represents Kuniyoshi's own entry into this storied history. Though Kuniyoshi's folk styling is humbler than the paintings of these forebearers, the heavy red drapery that he seems to lift with his raised arm harkens back to one of American art's most celebrated self-portraits, Peale's *The Artist in His Museum* (1822), a work Kuniyoshi may have encountered at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts when he

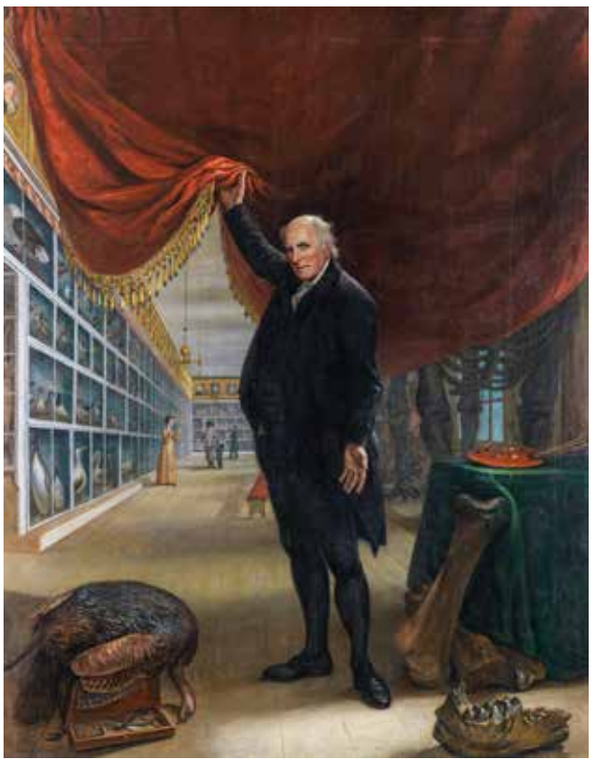

fig. 9 Charles Willson Peale (American, 1741–1827). *The Artist in His Museum*, 1822. Oil on canvas, 103¾ × 79⅞ in. (263.5 × 202.9 cm). Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Gift of Mrs. Sarah Harrison (The Joseph Harrison, Jr. Collection) (1878.1.2)

exhibited there in 1921 (fig. 9). Peale's canvas shows the artist standing in the nation's first museum of art and science, which he founded in 1784, and drawing back a plush red curtain to reveal a splendorous hall filled with portraits of American dignitaries and natural specimens, including a mastodon skeleton he famously exhumed. Positioning Peale as a new archetypal American Renaissance man, *The Artist in His Museum* celebrated the artist as a figure who "teach[es] Americans to see their cultural identity in the nation's democratic ideals and its natural history."[50]

Kuniyoshi's self-portrait, like Peale's, imagines the artist as a protean entrepreneur, fluent in multiple professional and creative enterprises. Kuniyoshi's drawn-back curtain, too, reveals a natural subject with nationalistic importance to its time: the American landscape, likely one of the Maine landscapes he frequently painted. As Corn writes, the post–World War I American art world evolved around shared rhetoric that analogized the growth of a national modernism with the tilling of the land and exhorted artists to immerse themselves in the "soil," a buzzword that was repeated with mantralike frequency.[51] Identifying with the soil implicitly tapped into and amplified the white American mythology of an unfettered national wilderness that was available for the taking and which would offer spiritual regeneration to those who claimed it. Kuniyoshi would draw on this rhetoric to defend his art against those who classified it as foreign: "I have worked and lived here [in America] since a boy." he asserted. "My art training and education have come from American schools and American soil."[52]

By painting himself creatively engaged with the era's core symbol of cultural nationalism, Kuniyoshi affirmed his legitimacy as both an American and a modernist. At the same time, his connection to the "soil" appears in jeopardy. Not only does he view the landscape from an isolated space, but in a hint at his own tenuous status in his adopted country, the bare tree in Kuniyoshi's self-portrait floats above the ground, with a single, small root reaching for the earth. This uncertainty extends to other elements of the composition. Whereas Peale's drapery reveals a rigorously systematized museum display, Kuniyoshi's only obfuscates the scene by fostering the ambiguity between interior and exterior space. And while Peale's mastodon represents a scientific endeavor intended to anchor the new nation in an ancient past, Kuniyoshi's camera situates his painting in modernity yet underscores the portrait's distinctly subjective, nonphotographic nature. Art historian Kenneth E. Silver postulates that painted portraiture flourished among the avant-garde concurrent with photography's ascent in the 1920s precisely because painters were no longer bound to a strict likeness and thus became free to reimagine the human image on their own terms. "It started to occur to many of the best artists," Silver proposes, "that photography, as a foil for the expressive possibilities offered by painting and sculpture, might be a force for aesthetic *liberation*."[53] Flouting his camera's mechanical rigor, Kuniyoshi's self-portrait exults in his artistry and imagination—the powers that liberated him to draw from a distinctly American creative lineage and claim his own place in it.

UNCERTAIN IDENTITIES

If Kuniyoshi was preoccupied with his precarious position in America as the Johnson-Reed Act was debated and passed into law in the early months of 1924, his decision to paint his own self-portrait at that same moment, employing a style infused by his burgeoning interest in early American portraiture, resounds with new meaning. Inserting his own countenance into a national portraiture tradition against the era's prevailing forces of exclusion, Kuniyoshi contended with the exoticized stereotypes he faced in the age of "racial art," both acknowledging and transgressively upsetting the assumption that his work was "a powerful signifier of the true primitive, a way for white viewers to make contact

fig. 10 Yasuo Kuniyoshi. *Self-Portrait as a Golf Player*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 50¼ × 40¼ in. (127.6 × 102.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund (293.1938)

with something otherwise unknowable."[54] The emphasis in *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* on the artist's multiple identities, moreover, was a forceful riposte to those who sought to contain him within the confines of a fixed "Oriental endowment."[55] Foregrounding his photography business and other labors in the American "soil," as well as his fruitful engagement with folk Americana and the cultural nationalism of the 1920s, Kuniyoshi cast doubt on essentialist certitudes and presented himself as an artist whose persona and aesthetic agenda were self-created, malleable, and deeply informed by experiences in his adopted country. And by situating himself in a national lineage of portraitist-entrepreneurs, he signaled a desire for agency in America's civic and creative life. Yet Kuniyoshi departed from his historical forbearers by instilling his self-portrait with tension and mystery, from its ambiguous spatial conception to the artist's puzzling gesture and fierce gaze. Counter to interpretations of his work as a cheerful fusion of East and West, these elements invoke the unstable, contingent, and often infuriating conditions of his life in a rising tide of Japanese exclusion and echo the anxious undertones that scholars have recently observed in his other works of the early 1920s, such as *Boy Stealing Fruit* (1923) and *Child Frightened By Water* (1924).[56]

Kuniyoshi's decision to highlight his photography—a part of his creative identity that was secondary to his art at the time and which other period artists saw as something to hide—is striking in this context. Curator Stephanie Hueon Tung has described the particular connection between photography and Asian American histories:

> Since the first Asian immigrants arrived in America in the mid-nineteenth century, social visibility has conferred vulnerability. Our modern-day system of passport controls was based upon nineteenth-century forms of visual policing developed specifically to regulate the movement of Chinese and Japanese bodies, the first national methods of biometric identification to utilize photography. Falling under the gaze of the camera was an experience shared by most Asian immigrants not primarily as a hobby of self-documentation or leisure but as a bureaucratic fact of racialized surveillance and policing.[57]

The camera, then, was often an instrument of control and subjugation for Asian Americans of Kuniyoshi's generation, symbolizing the lack of agency that so many experienced upon immigrating. Within Asian American communities, Tung elaborates, these historical uses of photography often produced anxiety and a desire to avoid drawing attention. *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* at once engages and overturns these associations. Depicting himself in the act of taking a photograph, Kuniyoshi evoked his bifurcated experiences—as a penurious photographer and successful painter, as a thoroughly modern artist immersed in historical aesthetics, and as an ostensibly exotic outsider who intends to be a forceful arbiter of American visual culture. Manipulating the camera while turning his hooded visage toward his audience, Kuniyoshi assumed control as both viewer and object of the gaze, defining his own reality even as he presented himself for public consideration. His painting, to again quote Tung, joins together a "yearning to be seen—to find meaning, be acknowledged, and, finally, belong—with the habits of opacity," a combination that is often central to "the process of being and becoming Asian in America."[58]

Kuniyoshi would double down on such themes in his second self-portrait of the 1920s, *Self-Portrait as a Golf Player* (fig. 10). A more explicit statement about his conflicted quest to identify as American, the painting

depicts the artist attired in a golfer's signature vest and plus fours, standing rigidly on an undulating golf course. For period audiences, Kuniyoshi's frank portrayal of his Japanese facial features struck a satirical contrast with the trappings of the faddish Anglo-American sport, which became "the almost essential equipment of the aspiring business executive" of the 1920s.[59] *Self-Portrait as a Golf Player* played on this understanding. As Wang writes, "with his Western garb and determinedly 'Asian-looking' face, it is as if Kuniyoshi were showing that he could dress like an American, play the sport like an American, and paint like an American."[60] Integrating his own image with a symbol of "making it" in America, Kuniyoshi proclaimed success in his adopted culture—and fittingly, the work appeared in MoMA's *Paintings by Nineteen Living Americans*.

But the incongruities of *Self-Portrait as a Golf Player* suggest that Kuniyoshi approached the painting with more irony than sincerity. Though he played golf with artist friends in Maine, the pastime was among the many areas of idealized American culture from which non-white groups were largely excluded. As historian David Roediger writes, the 1920s saw entire groups of European immigrants who had long faced discrimination assimilated into a catchall racial category of "whiteness" as a ballast against other newcomers, especially Asian Americans like Kuniyoshi, whose physical appearance prevented ready absorption into white normative society.[61] Assessing this situation, renowned sociologist Robert E. Park observed in 1926 that the Asian immigrant in America may experience "a profound transfiguration in sentiment and attitude, but he cannot change his physical characteristics . . . He cannot, much as he may sometimes like to do so, cast aside the racial mask."[62] In *The New York Times* the following year, critic Elisabeth L. Cary used similar language when she noted the friction between Kuniyoshi's golf attire and the artist "wearing the mask of the inscrutable East."[63] Golfing may have signified prosperity and inclusion for the white 1920s businessman, but Kuniyoshi's intentionally dissonant embrace of the sport questioned rather than confirmed his ability to belong. Like *Self-Portrait as a Photographer*, *Self-Portrait as a Golf Player* dramatizes the artist's uneasy position of "in-betweenness," provocatively undermining the era's nativist faith in "the authentic, the traditional, and the predictable."[64]

ASSERTING CREATIVE AGENCY

Kuniyoshi turned to self-portraiture in the 1920s to negotiate a polarized social climate that was alternately inhospitable to Japanese Americans and invested in celebrating his work as an expression of fixed ethnoracial difference. In *Self-Portrait as a Photographer*, and subsequently *Self-Portrait as a Golf Player*, he responded to these contradictory experiences by asserting his multifarious identity and ambitions. Bristling against the tight spaces assigned to him in the art world, everyday life, and the era's white nationalist politics and policies, Kuniyoshi used self-portraiture as a fertile, iterative site of self-invention. By destabilizing the conditions that shaped his career and personal life, and by making his own attendant claims to self-authorship, Kuniyoshi broke ground as one of the earliest American artists of color to confront the discourses about race, power, and diasporic identity that continue to define our national life. His self-portraits are vital to an increasingly expansive and heterogeneous story of American modernism, which accounts for the varied subject positions of its producers rather than accommodating avant-garde doctrine. Art historian Faye Raquel Gleisser argues that the canonical, white-centering narrative of modernism, in which figuration was largely configured as regressive, neglects "the racialized, gendered work of taking risks."[65] Kuniyoshi's production and display of *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* exemplify such risk-taking: a bold claim to creative agency and social visibility at a moment when Japanese Americans faced extreme marginalization, racism, and endangerment. Drawing us into fruitful experiences of encounter, empathy, and imagination, Kuniyoshi's painting continues to propose such moments of connection as a potent force for social change.

For Kuniyoshi, as for most Japanese Americans, the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States after the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor would bring a terrifying new intensity to the discriminatory policies of the 1920s. In one of the most shameful episodes of American history, the United States government forcibly relocated more than one hundred thousand individuals of Japanese descent living on the West Coast into incarceration camps and placed all others under restrictions as "enemy aliens." Under the new controls, Kuniyoshi was restricted from leaving New York and accessing his bank accounts. He was also forced to turn over his camera to the authorities—a requirement that poignantly validated *Self-Portrait as a Photographer*'s identification of the photographic medium with the artist's autonomy. Kuniyoshi's archives contain a plethora of government-issued identification cards, surveys, and codes of conduct from this period, records of the caution he needed to navigate this perilous environment. In one questionnaire, he warily explained that he immigrated to America in search of

"freedom in living and equal opportunity."[66] Despite the country's persistent failures to meet this promise, the artist never relinquished his goal to become an American citizen and immediately sent in an application after Congress reversed the country's prohibition on Japanese-American citizenship in 1952. Tragically, he died in May 1953, before completing the process.

In 1958, Truman Capote would use Kuniyoshi as a model for his character I. Y. Yunioshi, the Japanese-born photographer and landlord of Holly Golightly in the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (later played in an appallingly racist performance by Mickey Rooney in the film adaptation). Scholar Joseph Jonghyun Jeon has persuasively argued that Capote's Yunioshi relied on a compensatory erasure of the painful and embarrassing wartime mistreatment of Japanese Americans.[67] During the post–Pearl Harbor war years when the novella takes place, Jeon observes, Yunioshi would never have been permitted to work as a photographer; his camera, like the one belonging to the real Kuniyoshi, would have been confiscated. *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* has perhaps been subject to similar elisions and memory lapses, aided in part by Kuniyoshi's efforts to publicly define his art as a harmonious cultural fusion and thus assuage concerns about his loyalties. At its core, this landmark painting evinces a disquieting tension that speaks to the moment in which it was made and first exhibited. An assertion of ambivalence and doubt, defiance and power, *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* invokes broader Japanese American experiences of the early twentieth century, and yet the deft play of realism and opacity in the painting is indelibly that of Kuniyoshi. As Ben Shahn observed, Kuniyoshi's paintings are "never spelled out, always elusive . . . no picture is ever a closed statement, a finality, but is rather a haunting and undisclosed world in itself."[68]

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NOTES

1 These are *Self-Portrait* (1918; Fukutake Collection, Okayama); *Self-Portrait as a Photographer* (1924; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; fig. 1 in this article); *Self-Portrait as a Golf Player* (1927; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; fig. 10 in this article); and *At Work* (1943; Fukutake Collection, Okayama).

2 Yasuo Kuniyoshi, "East to West," manuscript for *Magazine of Art* 33 (February 1940), Kuniyoshi AAA, box 2, folder 46.

3 Wolf 2015, 30; Riehlman and Wolf 1983, 8.

4 Watson 1925; Kuniyoshi AAA, box 13, folder 2:67.

5 The publications that reproduced the painting were *The Arts, The Dial*, and *Der Querschnitt*.

6 Thayer paid $200 for the painting. Photocopy of Charles Daniel, Paintings, receipt, January 26, 1925, Object file 1984.433.11, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Self-Portrait as a Photographer*, 1924. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Modern and Contemporary Art Archives, New York.

7 McBride 1925a, 257.

8 *New York Times* 1925, X11.

9 In using the terms "Japanese American" and "Asian American," I am mindful that Kuniyoshi would not have used these identifiers, which only came into common parlance in the postwar era. I concur with Mark Dean Johnson's assertion that these terms help suggest the "myriad ties between a seemingly remote past and more recent expressions." Chang, Johnson, and Karlstrom 2008, xvii.

10 Kim 2018, 56–57.

11 Calvin Coolidge, "First Annual Message," December 6, 1923, The American Presidency Project Online, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/206712.

12 "Hearing before the Committee on Immigration," Japanese Immigration Legislation, 68th Congress, US Senate, 1st session, March 11, 1924, S. 2576, 3.

13 Kuniyoshi, "East to West," manuscript for *Magazine of Art* 33 (February 1940), Kuniyoshi AAA, box 2, folder 46.

14 Truman quoted in Plagens 2006.
15 Eglington 1934, 5.
16 Wang 2011, 27.
17 Wang (2011, 26–27) and Wolf (2015, 29–30) undertake some analysis of the painting, but these constitute relatively brief passages in larger surveys of the artist's work.
18 Teresa Carbone (2011, 98) may be the only scholar to note the coinciding dates of the self-portrait and the Johnson-Reed Act.
19 Corn 1999.
20 Tagg 1993, 37.
21 More recent efforts to reassess the importance of interwar figurative art include Rewald 2006, Silver 2008, and Carbone 2011.
22 Greenberg 1948, 594.
23 Wang 2017, 5.
24 This article is particularly indebted to Calo 2007; Francis 2012; Wang 2011 and 2017; Wolfskill 2017.
25 Calo 2007, vii–viii.
26 Wolf 2015, 25.
27 McBride 1925b, Kuniyoshi AAA, box 13, folder 2:67.
28 Eglington 1934, 5.
29 *New Yorker* 1926, 40.
30 Breuning 1929, Kuniyoshi AAA, box 13, folder 4:38.
31 Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Self-Portrait as a Golf Player*, 1927, Museum Collection Files, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
32 Watson quoted in Wolf 2015, 43.
33 Kuniyoshi, "American Art," manuscript for speech given at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1944, Kuniyoshi AAA, box 2, folder 36.
34 Wang 2017, 3.
35 Lee 2003, 7.
36 Kuniyoshi quoted in Salpeter 1937, 216.
37 Lee 2003.
38 Kuniyoshi quoted in Wolf 2015, 18.
39 Kuniyoshi, "Universality in Art," 1943, Kuniyoshi AAA, box 2, folder 53.
40 Kuniyoshi, "East to West," manuscript for *Magazine of Art* 33 (February 1940), Kuniyoshi AAA, box 2, folder 46:7.
41 Riehlman and Wolf 1983.
42 Brook quoted in ibid., 8.
43 Linden 2015, 86–94.
44 Inouye 2019, xiv.
45 Copeland 2009, 144.
46 Wang 2011, 32–33.
47 The loans comprised *Locomotive "Briar Cliff,"* painted by W. L. Breese, and a carved-wood cow by an unknown sculptor.
48 David Ward in Fortune, Reaves, and Ward 2014, 28.
49 Rather 2016, 4.
50 "Charles Willson Peale's *The Artist in His Museum*," Smithsonian American Art Museum, accessed August 8, 2024, https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/humboldt/online/charles-willson-peale-artist.
51 Corn 1999, 2–40.
52 Kuniyoshi quoted in Goodrich 1948, 35–36.
53 Silver 2008, 15.
54 Calo 2007, 139.
55 Breuning 1929.
56 Wolf 2015, 28–31.
57 Tung 2023, 26.
58 Ibid., 29.
59 Allen 2010, 179.
60 Wang 2011, 27–29.
61 Roediger 2018.
62 Park 1926, 138.
63 Cary 1927.
64 Wang 2011, 35; Francis 2012, 47.
65 Gleisser in Copeland, Aranke, and Gleisser 2023, 130.
66 Kuniyoshi, "US Department of Justice Application for Certificate of Identification (Aliens of Enemy Nationalities)," ca. 1942, Kuniyoshi AAA, box 1, folder 7:32.
67 Jeon 2019, 240–44.
68 Shahn's "Foreword," in *Yasuo Kuniyoshi Retrospective Exhibition* 1961.

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Crafting a Tolita-Tumaco Seated Elder Figure

HUGO C. IKEHARA-TSUKAYAMA AND AMANDA CHAU

The renovation of the Arts of the Ancient Americas galleries in the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing at The Metropolitan Museum of Art presented a welcome opportunity to reimagine the display of the extraordinary and diverse collection. Extensive conversations with colleagues and the careful observation and analysis of each object brought forth new narratives on the meaning, technology, and history of these ancient artworks. In some cases, the conservation assessment and remounting of objects inspired investigation into specific aspects of their manufacture. This research note presents, discusses, and interprets the results of the analysis of the Tolita-Tumaco seated elder figure that is prominently displayed in the gallery of ancient Ecuador (fig. 1).

fig. 1 Seated elder by unknown Tolita-Tumaco artist(s). Colombia or Ecuador, 200 BCE–400 CE. Ceramic, 25 × 14½ × 18⅝ in. (63.5 × 36.8 × 47.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Gertrude A. Mellon, 1982 (1982.231)

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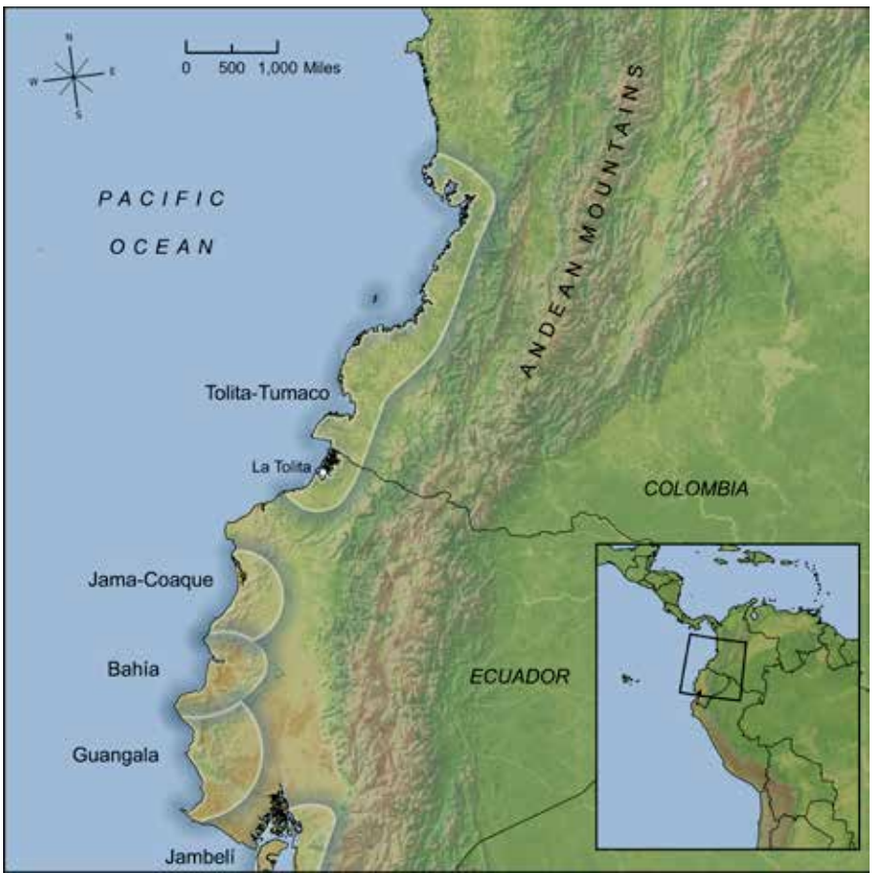


fig. 2 Map of Tolita-Tumaco archaeological culture and coetaneous societies. By Hugo C. Ikehara-Tsukayama

The figure is a refined example of the tradition of tridimensional ceramic sculpture that started in the fourth millennium BCE as part of what is known today as the Valdivia archaeological culture. These earliest examples are small, solid figures made of stone or fired clay, often with female characteristics.[1] During the first millennium BCE, Chorrera artists innovated the production by creating elegant hollow ceramic figures and expanding the repertoire to include animals and plants. The Chorrera tradition and its local variants were followed by a diversity of regional styles. After 300 BCE many artist communities of the Pacific Coast of Ecuador focused again on the human form, but this time highlighting aspects of political and religious authority, with males becoming the primary subject matter.[2]

The seated elder figure in The Met was crafted by one of these communities, known today as Tolita-Tumaco, that lived in the territory corresponding to the modern border between Ecuador and Colombia (fig. 2).[3] Tolita-Tumaco villages were placed close to raised agricultural fields—representing a farming technique that was invented to allow cultivation in floodable terrain—or near marine resources.[4] The largest settlement was La Tolita, a village located on an island that is part of a river delta. In the village the large public space was surrounded by tolas, massive earthen mounds that were used as residences or burial mounds for the elite. The origins of the Tolita-Tumaco tradition can be traced to 600 BCE, but the most distinctive works, including The Met's seated elder figure, were likely created between 200 BCE and 400 CE.[5] Along with ceramics the communities also developed one of the most elaborate metalwork traditions of the ancient Americas. These refined metalworks were influential in the region and other communities on the Pacific Coast of northern South America.[6]

The Tolita-Tumaco ceramic style derives from Chorrera, its predecessor, and is renowned for its large tridimensional sculptures. Using local gray clay, Tolita-Tumaco artists modeled houses, animals, people, and supernatural beings with added details including appliqués and incisions. In some cases they applied pre-fired colored slips or post-fired pigments. The use of molds was restricted to small figures or specific parts of larger figures, such as the face. Representations of community leaders (caciques), ancestors, and religious specialists (shamans) are among the main themes of Tolita-Tumaco figures.[7] Archaeologists have found broken human and animal ceramic figures in burial contexts and ritual caches in tola mounds, but also in domestic middens, suggesting that the effigies were used in a variety of contexts, especially in community ceremonies.[8]

Fig. 3a, b Seated elder figure (fig. 1) before and after conservation. Photograph in Michael C. Rockefeller Wing archives, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Met's figure corresponds to a particular type of statuette depicting elders. The face contains signs of advanced age: wrinkles, bags under the eyes, missing teeth, and chin stubble. The cranial vault is flattened, evoking the cultural practice of cranial modification that was performed during childhood and providing an unmistakable marker of ethnic identity or rank in adulthood during this era. Like many other examples from ancient Ecuador, the Met's figure highlights the multiple aspects of Indigenous leaders. It is adorned with collars and bracelets modeled in clay and rests on a seat, a traditional symbol of authority among communities between Ecuador and Mexico, including the Caribbean.[9]

The figure arrived at The Met in 1975 on loan from Gertrud A. Mellon and was later given to the Museum. There was evidence of previous restoration including a substantial amount of adhesive, bulked epoxy fill material, and a metal internal support holding together a group of twenty broken pieces with multiple missing parts (fig. 3a, b). The figure was displayed in the galleries in this condition until the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing galleries closed for renovation in summer 2021. Between then and 2024, this artwork was subject to research and analysis that led to changes in how it would be presented in the galleries and provided insights into its manufacture.

According to conservation records, doubts have existed about whether the seat was original to the figure since the object's acquisition.[10] The joined interface did not have like thicknesses, there was excess restoration fill material, and the figure's lower back fragment was connected to a smooth and apparently unbroken surface of the seat. Yet the presence of a seat is not unusual for this kind of figure; it often symbolizes the status of the individual and serves as structural support.[11] After further investigation and removal of fill materials, we discovered that the seat was, in fact, placed upside down sometime during a previous

fig. 4 View of the connection between the torso and the bench of the seated elder figure (fig. 1). Notice the missing piece, which is likely a platform, between the two parts.

restoration.[12] The cross section of what had been the bottom edge of the restored seat was broken and unfinished. In addition, there are flattened lugs pushed against the sides of the broken edge, suggesting a connection point. After the position was changed to reflect the findings, it became evident that the top of the seat was a horizontal platform, now missing, on which the figure sat (fig. 4).

One of the most striking features of the figure was its pose. In the previous restoration, the seated figure was leaning forward with bent arms and hands barely touching its thighs as if lunging toward the viewer standing before it (fig. 3). To achieve this pose, there would be no room left for its feet. However, well-preserved examples of Tolita-Tumaco figures in other collections show the presence of feet.[13] In the case of The Met's figure, the broken edge of the left ankle indicates a missing foot. Considering these observations, the orientation of the seat was flipped and spaces were added to account for a missing seat's top and the missing feet. These changes shifted the figure slightly into a new pose (fig. 5).

The new orientation tilted the figure's torso only a few degrees upward, but it affects how viewers would see the figure. In its new pose, the elder's lower torso rests almost vertically over the seat and only curves on top. It does not look like a seated person ready to lunge or stand up; instead, it portrays an old man calmly resting on a seat, his bent spine reflecting his age. Furthermore, this new pose captures a more accurate representation of the technical decisions taken by the potter(s) in order to prevent the figure from collapsing while drying. Moreover, as will be explained later in the research note, the pose alters its mounting as it shifts the weight and stress distribution.

fig. 5a–h Reconstruction of the crafting stages of the seated elder figure (fig. 1). Drawing by Hugo C. Ikehara-Tsukayama

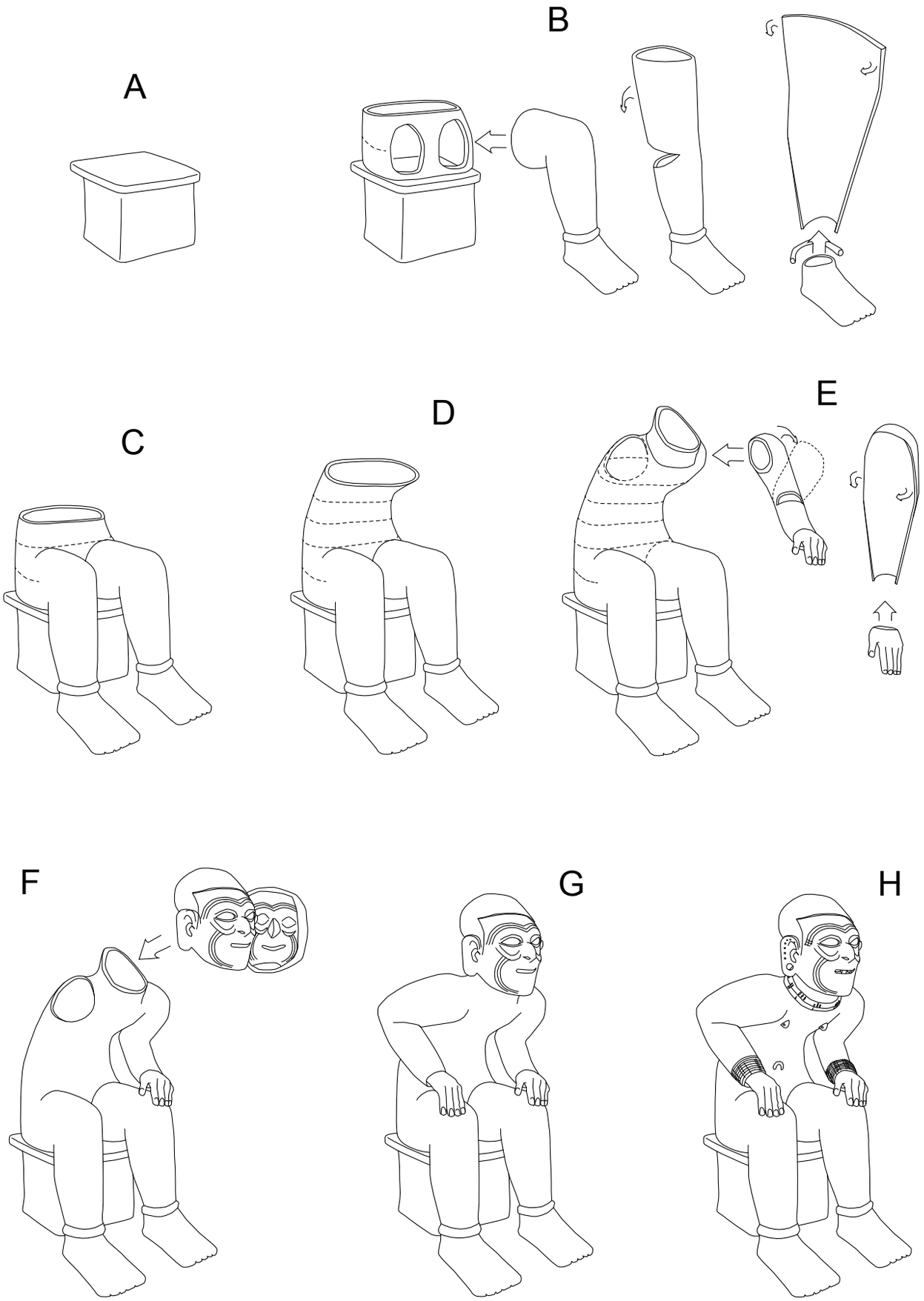
The conservation treatment and remounting of The Met's seated elder figure also allowed us to investigate other aspects of its facture. Old adhesive and excess bulked epoxy fill material were removed, and some sections were already separated as the result of a previous move, allowing us to access and measure the thickness of its original walls. These measurements and close examination suggest that most of the body was made in sections, often with slabs; only the face was shaped with a mold.

The interior surfaces of joints and/or unfinished areas were examined and identified, providing information about the assemblage order. When hand-building with clay, joints are generally smoothed to strengthen the union between parts. Any joint left unsmoothed on its interior indicates inaccessibility, generally at the end of the assembling stage. Smoothed joints may not be evident to sight, but tactile examination of the surfaces allowed us to detect unevenness that may reveal those fused clay sections. This assessment must be considered subjective; other examiners could have different observations and interpretations. As a result of our exploration, we suggest that the torso was built in stages using several horizontal slabs gradually stacked on top of each other edge to edge. Six long clay slabs between 8.5 and 10 centimeters high form the figure's torso. The first slab is assembled directly on the seat, and the other three slabs are stacked on top (fig. 5a–d). A thicker fifth slab creates the bend of the torso, and the sixth slab, forming a narrower ring, connects the upper limbs and the neck with the upper torso (fig. 5d, e).

During the construction of the torso, the potter would have given time for each part to dry slightly before continuing to the next stage to prevent the figure from collapsing. The construction time of this figure may have been longer in the humid environment of coastal Esmeraldas and Nariño than in a drier location, such as the Andean highlands. Given the climate, the potter may have had to compromise between having the figure walls thick enough to withstand gravity and thin enough to keep the figure light and easier to air dry.

For each part of the figure, we took ten measurements of wall thicknesses of the front and back of the head, each torso's slab section, upper arm, forearm, hands, ankles, upper and bottom part of the thigh, and the base and lateral section of the seat. In some sections, fewer than ten measurements were recorded because of the small accessible area. In total, we collected 154 wall thickness values.

The data indicates that the potter(s) worked with three different slab thicknesses. Thin slabs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(less than 7.5 mm thick) were used for the head, the section close to the ankle, and the forearms. A slightly thicker slab (less than 9 mm) was used for the upper arms. The thickest slabs (more than 13 mm) were selected for the hands and the calves. The torso's walls varied between 7.5 and 13.5 mm, supporting the hypothesis that it was built from different slabs piled on each other. The seat's walls have two modes—one very thick and another thinner—almost as if the potter was using leftover clay slabs from other body parts. This finding was surprising because one would expect more attention to this critical part of the figure, which structurally supports much of the figure's weight. When considering the whole body, however, the logic is clear, using thicker walls for the sections that would structurally support the figure (torso, legs) and thinner walls for the parts attached to the main body, such as limbs and head, to keep them lightweight. The hands were shaped with thick slabs because they were not hollow.

The legs were added after the first torso section was set and before the curved upper torso section was formed (fig. 5b). This process helped stabilize the weight of the upper body projecting forward. The legs may have been constructed from a single slightly conical shape with open ends—wider in the thigh and narrower toward the ankle. A lenticular portion on the underside of the knee could have been cut out and removed, allowing the potter to bend the leg. Because the interior surface of the knee became inaccessible after this step, it was left unsmoothed. Feet were then attached to the ankles. It would have been challenging or impossible to smooth the inside of the feet, leaving the ankle joint weak. This could explain why similar effigies in other collections have also lost their feet.

The upper limbs were made in a similar way to the legs (fig. 5e). They were attached to the upper torso, which was not proportionate to the rest of the body. The chest of an actual human torso would increase in width. Instead, the Tolita-Tumaco artist(s) decided to reduce its volume to give room to the voluminous shoulders while keeping the whole figure contained within the same width.

The wrists and hands were designed to rest on the legs. The solid hands, modeled from thick slabs of clay, are attached at the top half of the wrists, leaving the forearm end open. An irregular lug of clay under the wrist served as a connection between each forearm and thigh. The reduced care in finishing surfaces and details, such as the modeling and joining of the hands and feet with wrists and ankles, indicates that the concern was focused on the visual effect of the face in relation to the whole composition and not on the details of the rest of the body.

The face was shaped with a one-sided mold, and the remaining parts of the head and neck were completed by hand modeling (fig. 5f). There is a sign of a join across the middle of the forehead, just below the border of the face mold. This join suggests that the final face we see today was attached to an earlier attempt using a larger face mold. The smooth interior surfaces of these joins between the face and the rest of the head and neck suggest that the interior was accessible in this construction stage, and this could have been the orifice used when the right arm was attached to the upper torso (fig. 5f). There is no orifice on the torso-left arm joint.

Appliqués in the form of clay bands were added to the wrists, neck, and back to create bracelets, a collar, and a prominent spine, respectively (fig. 5h). At the leather-hard stage, grooved incisions and perforations were detailed with three different stylus-like tools of varying diameters. One tool with a diameter of less than 1.5 mm was selected for the chin stubble and incisions of the bracelets. Another one that was 2–2.3 mm in diameter was utilized for some incisions in the face and the collar. Lastly, a third tool with a diameter of approximately 2.8 mm was chosen to pierce the small holes along the ear and the areola. Depressions along the spine, as well as the larger pierced hole in the earlobes, were made with a tubular object, possibly a cane with a diameter of approximately 14 mm.

Because of the high humidity of the Tolita-Tumaco region, a uniform and controlled drying process must have been critical before firing the figure.[14] The exposure of the unfired figure to the sun would have cracked it. Slow drying under the shade may have taken several days. The placement of the object close to a heat source, such as a kitchen, or to uniform wind currents could have improved the process. Considering the enormous effort to create the figure, we speculate that this object could have been placed in a roofed room with cane walls without plaster, allowing the flow of air while providing protection from accidental breaking.

The cross section of the ceramic walls—a dark gray core with a lighter gray-brown color on both sides—indicates enough temperature to transform the clay paste into ceramic, but not enough time to remove all the carbonized organic material in the clay matrix.[15] These conditions may occur when using open fire, which also explains the fire clouds on the figure's surfaces. The loss of organic matter and subsequent creation of a porous structure may have helped remove moisture during firing but also left a lighter final

product. From the cross sections, we observed tubular pockets left by plant structures that would have burned off during firing. The horizontal orientation of the particles in the cross section also indicates the direction in which the slabs were placed.

A TOLITA-TUMACO POTTER'S WORKSHOP

Crafting this figure would have been challenging because of its size, shape, and weight. The complexity and time required for each construction step reveal the importance of the figure for the Tolita-Tumaco communities. The potters relied on techniques that were known for centuries. For example, slabs of clay flattened on a piece of cloth were pressed into single-piece molds to create figurines in the last stages of the Chorrera tradition.[16] The potters who created The Met's seated elder figure continued and adapted this early tradition, in which a mold was used for the face and the body was modeled from slabs.

Examining this work of art also allowed us to envision the processes of its creation. The broken pieces, incisions, and involuntary marks provide details of how the ancient artists worked. Potters' bodies and rhythms are often integrated with their working spaces. Based on a mental template of the final figure, the artists manage clay, water, molds, and tools accordingly. Often, more than one person is involved in crafting a single work, or multiple artists are working close by and their movements must be coordinated in the same space. In some social contexts, the workshops are part of homes, and the families must synchronize their artistic practice with domestic tasks.[17]

Without archaeological information on ceramic workshops for Tolita-Tumaco communities, our observations on the manufacture of The Met's seated elder figure may provide clues about how these ancient potters managed resources and tools.[18] Creating a figure of this size required a sizable space to accommodate multiple people handling various parts simultaneously. Workshop potters would have manipulated sheets of clay of different thicknesses, depending on the size of the part they were crafting, as observed in The Met's seated elder figure. Mold-made small ceramic figurines often show textile impressions on the back, suggesting that pieces of fabric eased the handling of clay slabs. Containers with water and perhaps watery clay for joining parts must have been placed nearby. Wet pieces of cloth may have been useful for keeping parts moist longer or for finishing surfaces. Pieces of gourds or other organic materials may have been used to smooth the surface of the figure. As mentioned above, the potters used stylus-like tools made of bone, wood, or metal of varying thicknesses and a cane to decorate the body with incisions, perforations, and notches. A cutting tool was required in many steps of its construction.

With the exception of the final stages much of the work may have been carried out inside a roofed space. The region is humid, but the intense sun could dry the figure within hours. However, a controlled drying process is critical to avoid cracking. The optimal process may have been aimed at obtaining the best results rather than decreasing time.[19] The final drying stage and the firing may have been done nearby to minimize moving distances and reduce the risk of breaking the clay figure while it was drying. These spaces may have been part of the same household-workshop compound, as they were in other parts of the Andes.[20] Generally, however, they are placed in locations that reduce the annoyance of smoke or the risk of fires.

The figure was not finished after firing. Holes in the ears, nipples, and nose indicate that other ornaments, very likely metallic, were hung from them. For example, another Tolita-Tumaco figure in The Met is decorated with gold earrings and a nose ornament.[21] The figures display the convergence of pottery and metallurgy, two art forms for which these ancient communities are known today. The question arises as to whether this ceramic naked body once also wore garments or headgear to resemble those finely dressed figures made by Jama-Coaque communities a few miles to the south.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Our analysis of The Met's seated elder figure highlights the importance of the face in this ancient art form. It was crafted using a different shaping technique, given more details, and positioned to become the visual center of the composition. The mold-produced face may carry multiple meanings. First, it is the part that gives the sculpture its humanlike identity. Tolita-Tumaco ceramicists also made figures of other beings, sometimes combining human bodies with animal heads. Other details in the face indicate the individual's age, while the complete head, which evokes cranial modification, marks the individual's rank in society.

The mold-made faces may have had yet another meaning, perhaps obvious to Tolita-Tumaco communities but more obscure to viewers today. The use of molds in ancient Ecuador was not a technical solution to increase productivity. As the current figure shows, time savings may have been minimal considering the sequential steps required to make the body. Also,

the molds were not used for the mass production of figures. Instead, molds can be seen as generative devices to replicate an original that may not be available—it may have been sacrificed or buried—creating a continuum linking every figure with the previous one through the creative act.[22]

An elder figure from the Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo, Guayaquil, seems to have been crafted using the same face mold, but it has a different body (fig. 6). It is not an exact copy but rather a figure that refers to an original or was perhaps regarded as a relative to an original, using kinship analogy. Face molds may have been devices shared between artists and passed to the next generation, connecting people through space and time. A figure in the Museo de América has two holes on top (fig. 7). Perhaps the molds were hung in the workshop or were conceived as portable devices to be shared between artists or carried by itinerant potters?[23] The mold in Madrid produces a face similar to the ones in The Met and Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo, but not the same. For example, the ears were included, and the mouth has a different appearance. The elder character is a theme in the Tolita-Tumaco repertoire that seems to highlight multiple aspects of an ideal leader.[24] Advanced-age features, as well as the collar, bracelets, and metallic ornaments, remind us that authority in ancient Ecuador was built from life experience, knowledge, prestige, and wealth.

Elder figures were once sculptures that reminded Tolita-Tumaco communities of the stature of their leaders. Today, however, the figures at museums in Ecuador and other countries are reminders of civilizations that flourished centuries ago. The context of the discovery

fig. 6 Elder figure by unknown Tolita-Tumaco artist(s). Colombia or Ecuador, 200 BCE–400 CE. Ceramic, H. 9 13/16 in. (25 cm). Archaeological Collection, Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo (MAAC), Ecuador (GA-5-1631-80)

fig. 7 Tolita-Tumaco one-side mold. Colombia or Ecuador, 200 BCE–400 CE. Ceramic, H. 3 3/8 in. (8.6 cm). Museo de America, Madrid (1981/04/084)

of The Met's seated elder figure during the twentieth century is largely unknown. This research note shows that, despite the loss of archaeological context, a detailed analysis of the artwork combined with results from archaeological research can provide insights into how these objects were originally made and the significance of their use.

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NOTES

1 Stothert 2003.
2 Ugalde 2009, 57–65, 159–64; Patiño Castaño 2017.
3 It is unknown how these ancient communities referred to themselves. Archaeologists on both sides of the modern border identified and named this archaeological culture independently. In Ecuador, the term Tolita was used after the La Tolita site. In Colombia, archaeologists used the term Tumaco after the locality in Nariño. However, the distribution of Tolita-Tumaco material culture reaches Buenaventura to the north. Scholars commonly use a combination of both terms, acknowledging this dual history.
4 Patiño Castaño 2017.
5 Valdez 1992; Scott 2011.
6 Scott 2011; Vetter Parodi 2020.
7 Valdez 1992; Ugalde 2009; Patiño Castaño 2017.
8 Valdez 1992, 39; Ugalde 2009, 21, 63.
9 McEwan and Looper 2021. In the ancient Americas, seats and stools were especially ubiquitous after 800 CE (for example, MMA 1980.34.34, MMA 1979.206.780, and MMA 1979.206.426), but the history of this tradition starts much earlier, as some other examples show (MMA 1991.436.7a, b.).
10 Document on file; Michael C. Rockefeller Wing, MMA.
11 The section has very thick walls suggesting this intended function.
12 The seat was probably placed upside down because it could stand on its own that way, given all the losses.
13 See examples in Brezzi 2003, figs. 250 and 253, and Ugalde 2009, fig. 33. These examples also show the top of the platform-like seat.
14 The average relative humidity is 90% and the annual precipitation up to 6,000 mm. Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado de la Provincia de Esmeraldas 2012, 112.
15 Rice 2005, 334–35.
16 Cummins 1998, 200–201.
17 Shimada 1994.
18 Also, the majority of Ecuadorean ceramic figures in collections in Ecuador and elsewhere lack contextual information or provenience.
19 Interpretations of the logic behind production methods, such as the use of molds, tend to emphasize optimal results as measured in boosted productivity—larger output with less time, energy, and resources. However, these objects were for specialized use and not mass-produced. Thus, optimal choices focused on reaching the successful shaping, drying, and firing of the ceramic figures.
20 Shimada 1994; Tschauner 1994.
21 MMA 1991.436.7a, b. It is possible that the metallic objects were added after the figure was discovered by the dealer or another intermediary. However, María Fernanda Ugalde (2009, fig. 27) shows a ceramic figure with a gold bead inserted in the belly button and cites a reference on page 63 that mentions a figure discovered with a collar with gold beads inside a tola mound.
22 Cummins 1998, 208.
23 Ramón Joffre 2011.
24 Ugalde 2009, 65–68.

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Brother Gregorio Belo of Vicenza by Lorenzo Lotto

ANDREW H. CHEN

The two exhibitions of Lorenzo Lotto's portraits organized in Madrid and London in 2018–19 gave visitors the opportunity to appreciate the artist's remarkable achievements conveying the inner life of a wide range of sitters over a period of more than fifty years.[1] The Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Brother Gregorio Belo of Vicenza*, shown at both venues, is a consummate image of interiority, depicting the Hieronymite brother gazing out at the viewer while meditating on the Crucifixion, visualized beyond his right shoulder (fig. 1).[2] The portrait is dated on the work itself and by Lotto's famous book of accounts, the *Libro di spese diverse*. At the lower right of the canvas is an inscription naming the man portrayed as Gregorio Belo of Vicenza and stating his age in 1547 as fifty-five.[3] Lotto, in his account book entry recording the

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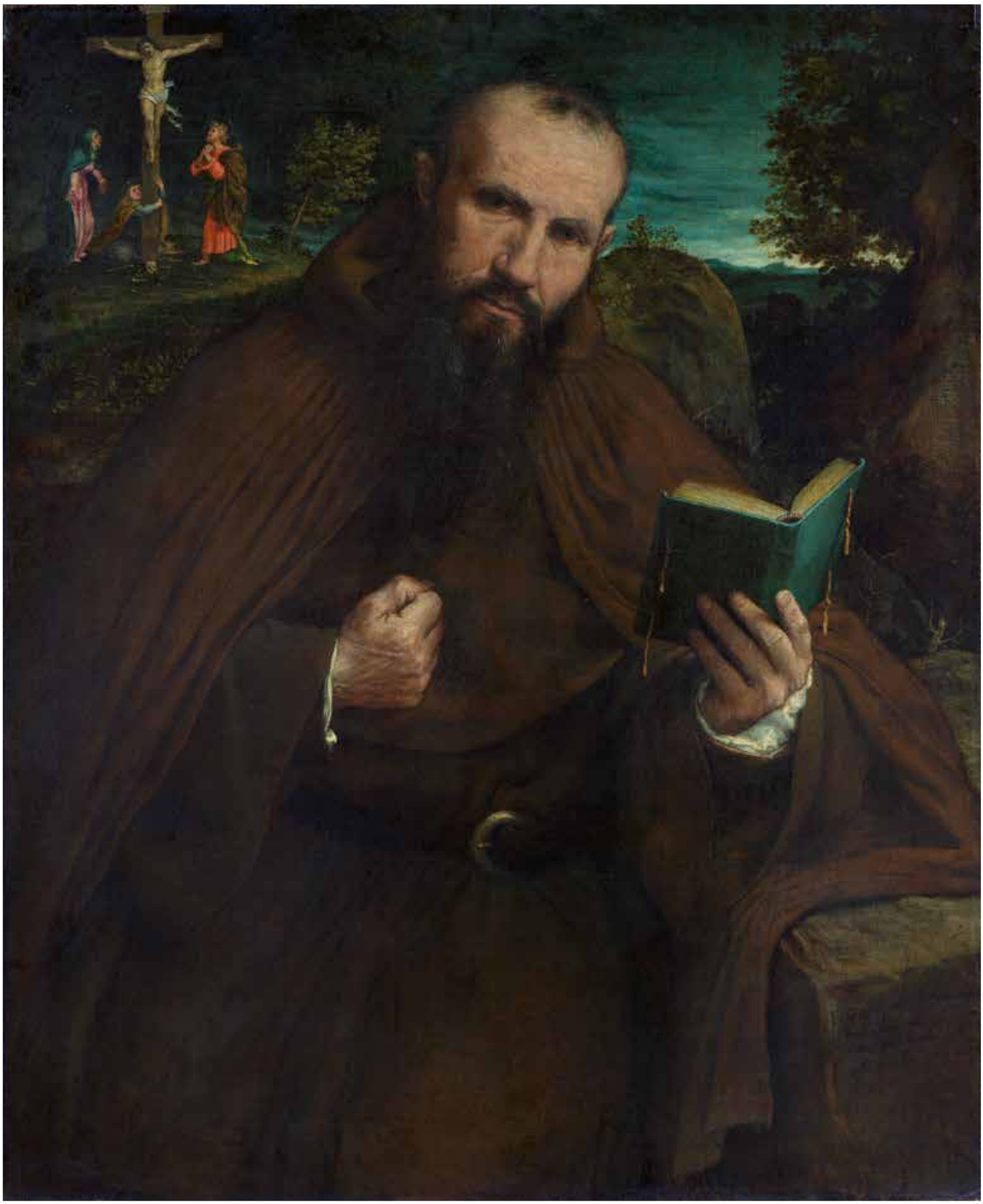
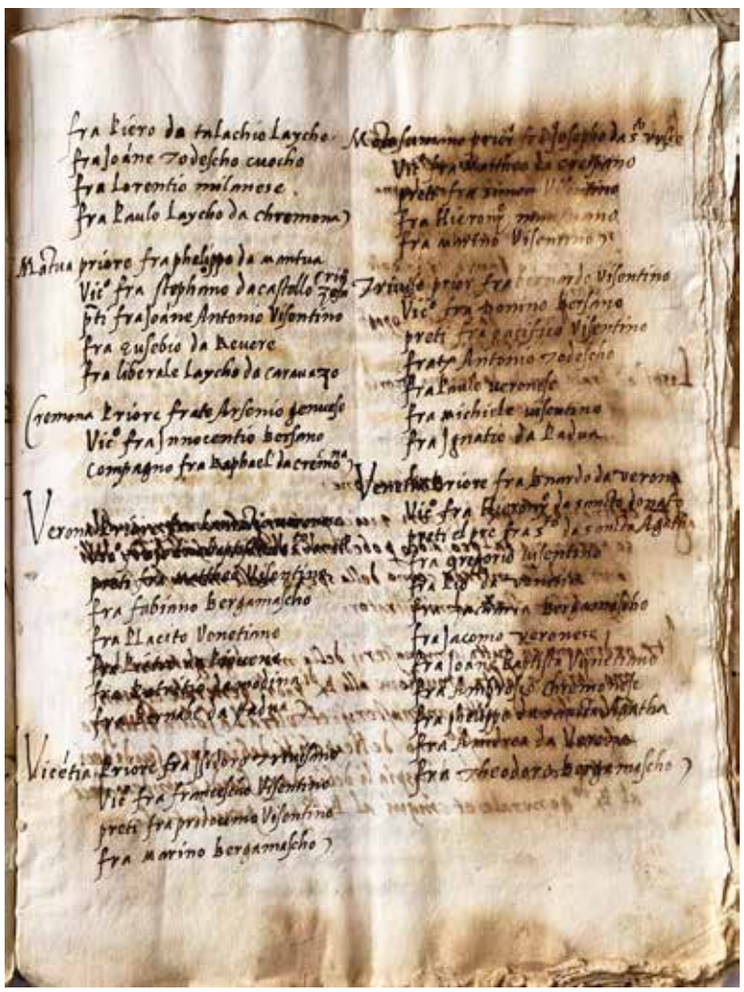


fig. 1 Lorenzo Lotto (Italian, ca. 1480–1556), *Brother Gregorio Belo of Vicenza*, 1546–47. Oil on canvas, 34⅜ × 28 in. (87.3 × 71.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1965 (65.117)

fig. 2 Register of members present at a Hieronymite general chapter on September 30, 1542. Gregorio Belo's name is fourth in the list of brothers from Venetia, at bottom right. Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, S. Maria Maddalena di Treviso, b. 7, proc. 139, Capitoli generali antichi, Archivio di Stato di Treviso

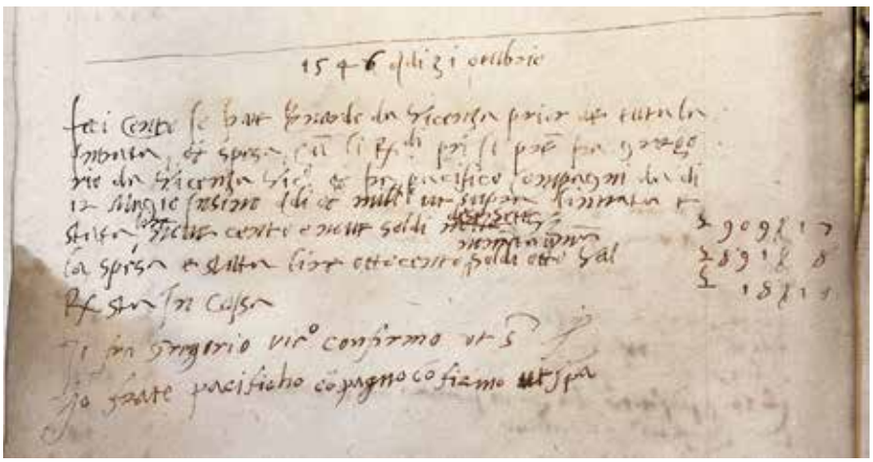
commission of the work on December 9, 1546, refers to the patron as "Gregorio da Vicenza of the brothers of San Sebastiano in Venice."[4] The artist received five payments from Brother Gregorio (or through an intermediary) between December 13, 1546, and October 11, 1547.[5] San Sebastiano was the church of the Hieronymites, formally the Poor Hermits of Saint Jerome, in Venice.[6] As its dedication to a saint known for his time spent as a hermit in the wilderness suggests, this was an order with an ascetic-penitential orientation.[7] The congregation originated in 1380 when Pietro da Gambacorta (1355–1435) traveled to Mount Cesana, east of Urbino, in pursuit of an eremitic life and established a community there. In 1393, one of his followers moved to Venice and founded a monastery at the site where San Sebastiano now stands. The order's sixteenth-century constitutions continued to reflect the ascetic outlook of its founder, requiring fasting and penitence of all the brothers, especially during Lent.[8] The Hieronymites' practices recalled Jerome's descriptions of the way he would deprive himself of food and smite his breast



while in the desert to subdue the fires of lust.[9] In Lotto's portrait, Belo strikes his chest with a closed fist, while fifteenth- and sixteenth-century representations of Jerome performing the same action invariably show him using a rock.[10]

Normally, a description of someone as one "of the brothers of San Sebastiano" would be a straightforward indication of his institutional home. In his recent catalogue raisonné of Lotto's work, Enrico Maria Dal Pozzolo treats Belo as one of the Venetian friars.[11] Andrea Bayer has suggested, however, that in his account book Lotto uses the designation instead to signal Belo's affiliation with the Hieronymite order more generally.[12] Another entry in Lotto's account book, related to an altarpiece commissioned by the Hieronymites, records that in March 1547 Belo was the *vicario* (vice-prior) at Santa Maria Maddalena in Treviso, about thirty kilometers north of Venice.[13] New evidence presented here demonstrates that Belo was already serving as *vicario* at Santa Maria Maddalena the previous year, when the portrait was commissioned. Archival documents also show, however, that earlier Belo had been a brother at San Sebastiano in Venice as well.[14] These clarifications serve as a point of departure for a reassessment of the meaning of Lotto's *Brother Gregorio Belo*, viewed in the context of the Hieronymite order's tumultuous history in the period leading up to the commission. It is suggested that the image it presents of steadfastness in the midst of hardship should be interpreted in relation to a long, acrimonious legal battle that drew the Hieronymites of the Veneto into a conflict with the Roman Church at the highest level.

Surviving acts of Hieronymite general chapters of the 1530s and 1540s, preserved in the state archives in Treviso, document a "fra Gregorio vicentino" (also spelled "vincentino" and "visentino") at gatherings of April 28, 1532, April 26, 1535, and September 30, 1542. He is listed as one of the brothers coming from Venice ("Venetia"), that is, San Sebastiano (fig. 2). Belo is also likely the "fra Gregorio" cited in a San Sebastiano account book entry dated March 27, 1543.[15] His name next surfaces in a pair of documents from Santa Maria Maddalena, Treviso, dated October 31 and December 28, 1546 (see figs. 3, 4 and Appendix). In these, Bernardo de Biliolis, prior of Santa Maria Maddalena and Lotto's confessor, records the total income and expenditures of the institution during the periods May 12–October 31 and October 31–December 28 of that year.[16] The figures are confirmed by Belo and another brother, Fra Pacifico. Belo identifies himself as *vicario* of Santa Maria Maddalena in both signatures; in the second, he includes



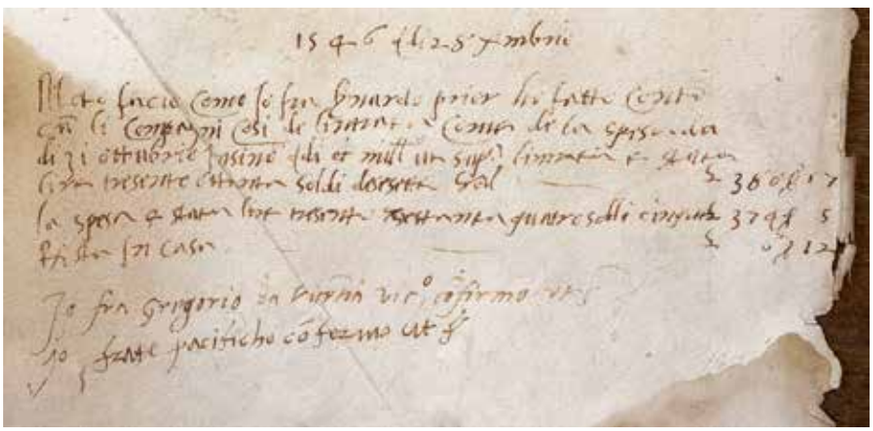


fig. 3 Account of income and expenditures at Santa Maria Maddalena, Treviso, dated October 31, 1546, recorded by Bernardo de Biliolis and signed by Gregorio Belo. San Sebastiano, Venice, Atti, b. 34, Scritture di S. Fida di Roman e Litti con P. Girolamo Messio, Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV)

fig. 4 Account of income and expenditures at Santa Maria Maddalena, Treviso, dated December 28, 1546, recorded by Bernardo de Biliolis and signed by Gregorio Belo. San Sebastiano, Venice, Atti, b. 34, Scritture di S. Fida di Roman e Litti con P. Girolamo Messio, Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV)

his city of origin, Vicenza. It is clear from the accounts that Belo took over the position of vice-prior that year; the financial summary of May 10, 1546, identifies a different person, Donino Ruzino, as *vicario* of Treviso.

In other words, Gregorio Belo was based at San Sebastiano in Venice from the early 1530s to the early 1540s; sometime between 1543 and 1546, he relocated to Santa Maria Maddalena, Treviso. At about the same time as the Belo portrait commission—that is, in 1546 or slightly later—the Hieronymites ordered a painting for the sacristy of San Sebastiano of the Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist, and Mary Magdalen, with Jerome and Blessed Pietro da Gambacorta *in abisso* (figs. 5, 6).[17] The painting is flanked by canvases showing Saint Sebastian and Onuphrius. The commission was made by Bernardo Torlioni of Verona, prior of San Sebastiano; if an eighteenth-century Hieronymite source is to be believed, the artist was his nephew Raffaello.[18] In images of the penitent Jerome, the saint often contemplates a diminutive crucifix, but here the large scale and full setting produce the impression that one is witnessing the imaginative vision of both Jerome, who gazes at Christ, and Pietro da Gambacorta, who is partly turned toward the viewer, with eyes cast downward, book in hand, and one finger pointing up.[19] A comparison of the portrait with the sacristy painting is instructive. Belo's gesture emulates that of Jerome, but like Pietro da Gambacorta, he looks away from the Crucifixion scene, positioned by Lotto off in the distance. There is thus a stronger perception that Belo's vision is purely imagined rather than generated on the basis of an object before his eyes. The windblown tree on the Calvary mount and Christ's flapping loincloth convey something of the turbulence and intensity of his meditation.

A list of books at San Sebastiano from 1535 indicates that the devotional text that the Hieronymites would have used to spur the kind of mental picturing witnessed in the portrait was Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi*.[20] This late fourteenth-century text is modeled after the Franciscan *Meditationes vitae Christi* from around 1300, and instructs viewers to imagine themselves present at events in the life of Christ.[21] "Put yourself at the scene with your total concentration," the reader is told in a chapter on the Crucifixion.[22] Encouraging prolonged meditation, Ludolph discusses and elaborates on the meaning of various aspects of the Gospel narrative: he details the sorrow of the Virgin, the weeping of Mary Magdalen, and the Seven Sayings of Christ on the Cross, the third of which is directed at his mother and John the Evangelist ("Woman, behold thy son [. . .] Behold thy mother," John 19:26–27).[23] The author's discourse on the Third Saying leads him to a meditation on the three hours of darkness that covered the earth during the Crucifixion, evoked in both the portrait and the sacristy painting.[24]

Another passage in the *Vita Christi* relevant to Belo's hand gesture is the one explicating the verse in the Gospel of Luke describing how those who gathered to watch the Crucifixion went away beating their breasts in mourning (Luke 23:48).[25] Ludolph cites the early medieval exegete Bede (d. 735), who held that the multitude consisted of two types: the righteous, who were mourning the unjust execution of someone they loved, and the wicked, who were feeling guilty for bringing about his death.[26] The *Vita Christi* thus provided a moral framework for the act shown in Lotto's painting, inviting the Hieronymites to identify with the good and reject the bad, both of whom were ostensibly performing similar actions at the Crucifixion. It was one's intention that mattered.

Other aspects of the sitter's presentation merit further consideration and contextualization. Belo's weathered face is dramatically lit with shadows around his eyes

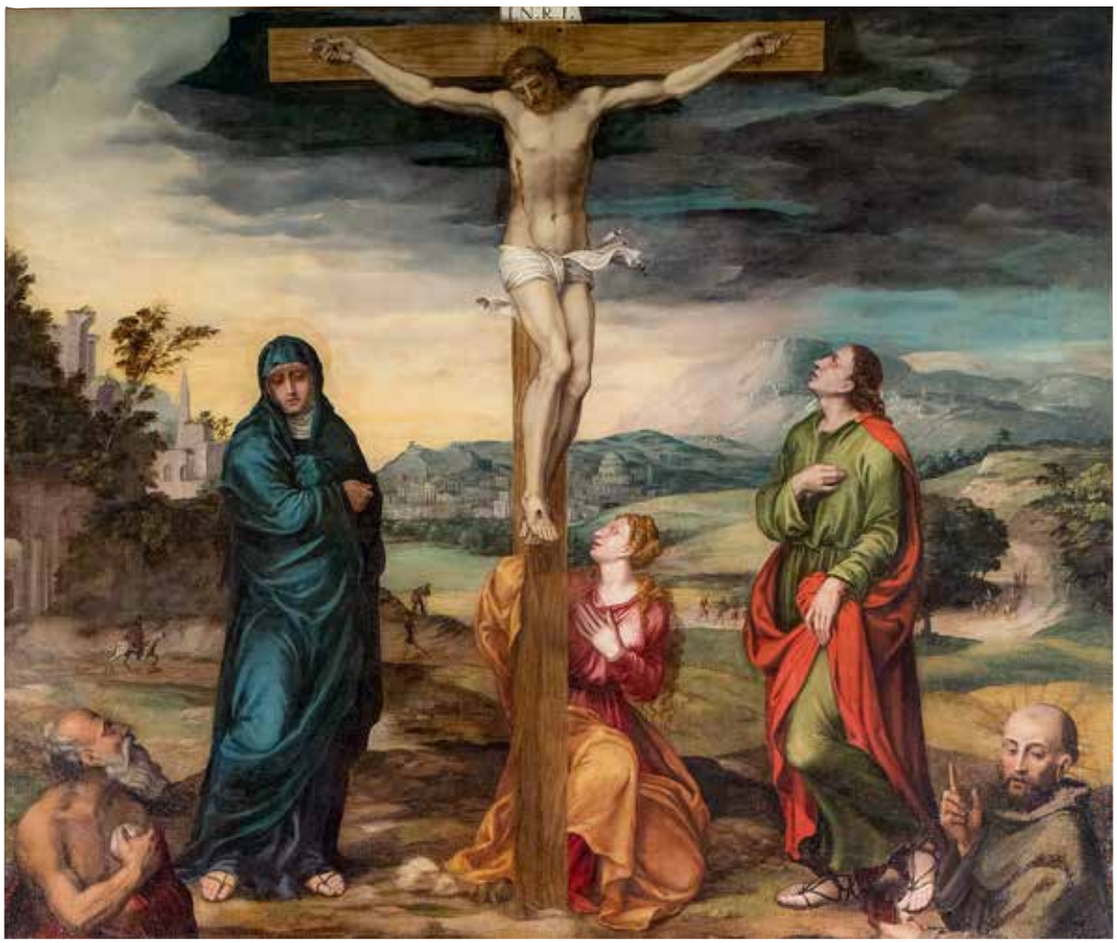


fig. 5 Raffaello Torlioni (Italian, 1516–1549 or 1550). *Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist, Mary Magdalen, Jerome, and Pietro da Gambacorta*, ca. 1546–48. Oil on canvas, 62 × 72½ in. (157.5 × 184 cm). San Sebastiano, Venice

and along the temples; a sense of challenging circumstances is registered by the spindly, leafless branches seen along the edge of Belo's brown hooded cloak at his shoulder and next to the book.[27] The attitude conveyed by his gaze and gesture, though, is uncompromising, determined, even defiant. The austerity of a hermit's wilderness is a customary iconography for the penitent Saint Jerome. However, it is also meaningful to situate Belo's display of resoluteness in relation to the institutional chaos that he had lived through in the 1530s and 1540s, and which continued to affect the Hieronymites in 1546 when the picture was commissioned.

In these years, all of Europe was grappling with the impact of the Protestant Reformation and the new ideas coming out of the North, such as justification by faith and predestination. The Veneto was no exception; indeed, both Venice and Treviso were hotbeds of unorthodox thinking.[28] Lotto and his social circle were thoroughly caught in the upheaval: a number of Lotto's acquaintances and friends in Venice had evangelical or so-called spiritual inclinations. Lotto bought copies of a catechism of Calvinist inspiration titled *On the Christian Institution* (*De la istituta christiana*) in 1544 during a three-year stay in Treviso, and he produced portraits of Martin Luther and his wife for a relative who hosted the artist in Venice.[29] As for Gregorio Belo, it has long been known that in this period the Hieronymite order was in conflict with the papacy, but the literature on the painting has yet to fully account for the nature of these problems. The result has been confusion around the orthodoxy versus heterodoxy of the order. For instance, Massimo Firpo views the Belo portrait as affirming the importance of a balance between faith and works—the traditional position of the Church, ratified at the Council of Trent in 1547 just as Lotto was working on the portrait. However, in the 2008 catalogue *Renaissance Faces: Van Eyck to Titian*, Minna Moore Ede characterizes Belo and the Hieronymites as crypto-Protestants, asserting that they sympathized with heretical Lutheran ideas that threatened the authority of Rome.[30] An analysis of the surviving evidence demonstrates that the underlying causes of the Hieronymites' difficulties were in fact constitutional and legal rather than theological. In 1538, Pope Paul III sent two visitors from the Congregation of

Santa Giustina to the Hieronymite monasteries in the Province of Treviso—the subdivision of foundations within the order to which San Sebastiano, Venice, and Santa Maria Maddalena, Treviso, belonged—to help reform an order that had developed a scandalous reputation.[31] Examination of the pope's brief reveals that the Hieronymites' notoriety was due to a lack of discipline that had resulted in certain brothers handling weapons, committing unnamed shameful acts, and stealing church property.[32] Book historian Monica Bocchetta has argued that the Hieronymites' disorderly conduct was a consequence of their not yet being subject to an approved rule (such as the Rule of Saint Augustine, which they would adopt in 1569).[33] The Hieronymites did have a series of constitutions from 1477, but according to the proem of a reformed set of bylaws penned in 1541, they were old and had been just about "cast into oblivion."[34]

The pope's 1538 reference to violence and crime is an allusion to a saga whose basic features have been sketched out by Lucia Nadin.[35] In essence, the Hieronymites claimed the rights to a church in the Diocese of Padua called Santa Felicita di Romano, which came with an income afforded by the property associated with it. Their claim was contested by a priest of Albanian extraction named Girolamo Messio, and in 1532, Pope Clement VII assigned the church to him.[36] The Hieronymites refused to concede, however, and, according to a later account published by Messio, that same year a band of Hieronymites forcibly occupied Santa Felicita armed with arquebuses (firearms). One of these, he says, was none other than Bernardo de Biliolis.[37] Paul III upheld his predecessor's decision.[38] The Hieronymites persisted in their occupation of Santa Felicita, however, and Messio took his case to the tribunals of the Holy See. The Venetian archives contain numerous letters of 1538–39 from the Hieronymites' agent in Rome, Daniele Villa, addressed to Gregorio Belo at San Sebastiano, concerning these legal proceedings.[39] There are also missives from Belo in Venice to Biliolis in Treviso forwarding important information about the matter.[40] Continuing to favor Messio, the papacy repeatedly placed the monasteries of the Province of Treviso under interdict between 1538 and 1541, preventing the friars from saying masses and burying the dead, and so precipitating an economic crisis.[41] A notarial instrument of December 1541 states that in September of that year representatives of the pope

fig. 6 Sacristy of San Sebastiano, Venice

issued the Hieronymites a penal warning (*monitorium penale*) and letters of citation (*litterae citatorialis*) for four brothers.[42] Under mounting pressure, the Hieronymites capitulated, relinquishing the priory of Santa Felicita, at least for the time being. Earlier that year, they had also demonstrated their openness to reform—in the sense of correcting their behavior—by drafting a new set of constitutions. The endeavor was led by Bernardo Torlioni, who was at this point vicar general of the order, in collaboration with Biliolis, then head of the Province of Treviso (*Provinciale*), and others.[43] The brothers received absolution from Rome in late 1541.[44]

What brought the wrath of the Roman Church upon the Hieronymites was therefore not heretical belief but their contravention of a papal ruling in a dispute over property. Although the worst was over by the late 1540s, Messio continued to take legal action against the Hieronymites, demanding arrears for the revenue generated by the land associated with Santa Felicita. He also denounced them extrajudicially with prints posted in public spaces, cited as *ceduloni* in archival documents. They proclaimed the excommunication of the friars in large script and featured images of demons.[45] The prints damaged the brothers' reputation. A letter of support from the Venetian government to the pope on March 1, 1548, asks the latter to help free the brothers of the "disturbance and molestation" that Messio was continually bringing upon them.[46] The worn yet steely visage pictured by Lotto may be understood, then, as that of a man in his fifties whose community had been beleaguered by litigation and defamation for many years. Because Messio posted his *ceduloni* in Piazza San Marco and other high-profile places in Venice, such as the Rialto, there can be no doubt that Lotto was aware of the situation.[47] Character assassination greatly impacted a religious community's finances because monasteries relied on the lay public for almsgiving and engagement for spiritual services. This series of events thus also offers context for Lotto's comment in his account book that Belo "did not want to give more" than six *lire* on May 7, 1547, as partial payment for the portrait.[48] The document of December 28, 1546, published here shows that over a two-month period the brothers of Santa Maria Maddalena collected only about six and a half *lire* more than they spent. In the years leading up to the commission, the monastery's expenses frequently outstripped its income.

The order's difficulties internally, with Messio and with the papacy offer a meaningful context in which to interpret the imagery of the Belo portrait and, in particular, the intensity and resolve of the sitter, conveyed so deftly by Lotto. Belo's self-identification with Jerome is not the same as a claim of persecution, but it is a declaration of righteousness in the midst of a trying situation. There is also, perhaps, an intimation of hope in the way the bare branches near the sitter in the foreground give way to greenery and, in the distance at the right, the pale light of the sun emerging from behind bluish mountains. Much of the foreground and landscape is illuminated, by contrast, in the sacristy *Crucifixion*. In reality, Belo and the Hieronymites would not be able to attain the peace they wished for; the conflict over Santa Felicita would drag on, *ceduloni* and all, until the time of Messio's death in 1569.[49]

To return to the account book entry with which this discussion began: when making his entry of December 9, 1546, Lotto likely knew that Brother Gregorio had previously lived at the monastery in Venice, but his use of the expression "brothers of San Sebastiano" as a general name for the Hieronymites also seems to have been an accepted practice. The papal notarial instrument of December 1541 cited above similarly refers to Biliolis as belonging to the "monastery of Saint Sebastian of the Venetians" even though he was based in Treviso from at least 1528 to the time of his death in 1564.[50] It would have made little sense for the pope's representatives to try to keep track of who was where; the brothers frequently moved from monastery to monastery.[51] Prior to 1532, Belo had been in Padua and Cremona. As we have seen, he was in Venice and Treviso in the 1530s and 1540s and then his name appears once again in the acts of San Sebastiano chapter meetings from 1550 to 1576, indicating that he spent his last decades in the Serenissima and lived to see his church decorated by Paolo Veronese in the 1550s and 1560s.[52] It is possible that the Lotto portrait accompanied Belo back to Venice, where it was eventually purchased by Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg as a work by Veronese.[53]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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APPENDIX

Accounts of the Hieronymite foundation at Santa Maria Maddalena, Treviso, dated October 31 and December 28, 1546. S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 34, Scritture di S. Fida di Roman e Litti con P. Girolamo Messio, Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV)

October 31, 1546
I, brother Bernardo of Vicenza, prior, took account of all of the income, and expenditure, with the Reverend fathers, the priests brother Gregorio of Vicenza, vice-prior, and brother Pacifico, companions, from 12 May until the day and year as above. The income was nine hundred and nine *lire* seventeen *soldi* worth L 909 s 17
The expenditure was eight hundred ninety-one *lire* eight *soldi* worth L 891 s 8
Remaining in the money chest L 18 s 10
I, brother Gregorio, vice-prior, confirm as above
I, brother Pacifico, companion, confirm as above

December 28, 1546
I make it known how I, brother Bernardo, prior, have taken into account with my companions the income as well as the expenditure, from 31 October until the day and year as above. The income was three hundred eighty *lire* seventeen *soldi* worth 380 L 17 s
The expenditure was three hundred seventy-four *lire* five *soldi* 374 L 5 s
Remaining in the money chest L 6 s 12
I, brother Gregorio of Vicenza, vice-prior, confirm as above
I, brother Pacifico, confirm as above

1546 adì 31 otubrio
Feci conto io frate Bernardo da Vicenza prior de tuta la intrata, et spesa, cum li Reverendi padri li preti fra Gregorio da Vicenza Vicario et fra Pacifico compagni da dì 12 magio insino adì et millesimo ut supra l'intrata è stata lire novecento e nove soldi desesete val L 909 s 17
la spesa è stata lire ottocento novanta unum soldi otto val L 891 s 8
Resta in cassa L 18 s 10
Io fra Gregorio vicario confirmo ut supra
io frate pacificho compagno confirmo ut supra

1546 adì 28 xmbrio
Noto facio como io fra Bernardo prior ho fatto conto cum li compagni così de l'intrata come de la spesa da dì 31 ottubrio insino adì et millesimo ut supra l'intrata è stata lire tresento ottanta soldi desesette val L 380 s 17
la spesa è stata lire tresento settantaquatro soldi cinque L 374 s 5
Resta in casa L 6 s 12
Io fra Gregorio da Vicentia vicario confirmo ut supra
io frate Pacificho confermo ut supra

NOTES

1 The English version of the exhibition catalogue is Dal Pozzolo and Falomir 2018.
2 MMA 65.117; see the online catalogue entry at https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436917, accessed June 9, 2024.
3 ".F. Gregorij belo de Vincentia / eremite .D[ivi]. hieronimi Ordinis beati / fratris Petri de pisis Anno / etatis eius. LV.M.D.XLVII." The book that he holds is identified by an inscription on the cover as the *Homilies* of Gregory the Great, the sitter's namesake. It appears to be the octavo edition published in 1543; see Miguel Falomir's entry in Dal Pozzolo and Falomir 2018, 330, no. 44. For an analysis of the binding pictured in the painting, see Pickwoad 2022, 129–30.
4 "In Treviso on December 9, 1546, debit brother Gregorio of Vicenza of the brothers of San Sebastiano, Venice for his portrait from the life, for which no price was given, with a little crucifix, the Madonna, Saint John and the Magdalene, worth 8 ducats"; Lotto 2017, 172, fol. 51v: "in Treviso adì 9 decembre del 1546 die dar fra' Gregorio da Vicenza de i frati de San Sebastian da Venetia per un suo retrato de naturale del qual non fu fatto precio, con un crucifisseto, la Madona, san Joanne e la Madalena, valse ducati 8."
5 Lotto 2017, 172, fol. 52r.
6 For the history of the church of San Sebastiano, see Ranieri 2002, Evers 2008, and Salomon et al. 2024.
7 See Ferrara 1964 and Bocchetta 2016.
8 "Constitutioni del 1541," S. Onofrio, MS S. Onofrio 67, fols. 11v–13r, BNCR.
9 Jerome 1933, 66–69 (letter 22).
10 See, for instance, the examples brought together in Giammarioli 1983.
11 Dal Pozzolo 2021, 80.
12 Bayer 2005, 46.
13 Lotto 2017, 215, fol. 79r. The altarpiece is mostly lost; for one of the lateral figures now at the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida, see Caroli 1986 and Dal Pozzolo 2021, 422, no. I.147. On Santa Maria Maddalena, Treviso, see Lazzari 1939; Aurenhammer 1999; and Garton 2012.
14 Lucia Nadin (2013, 33) refers to a 1539 San Sebastiano chapter meeting at which Belo was present; the document is S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 34, Scritture di S. Fida di Roman e Litti con P. Girolamo Messio, notarial instrument dated April 30, 1539, ASV.
15 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 85, accounts of 1532–43, at March 27, 1543, ASV: "Dal patre fra gregorio de confessione L 58 s–."
16 Lotto identifies Biliolis as his confessor in his 1546 will; see Lotto 1969, 303.
17 The woodwork for the sacristy was begun in 1543, and the final payment to Luca *marangon* (carpenter) was made in March 1546; see Gisolfi 2017, 132, 247–48. It seems plausible that the *Crucifixion* commission was made around this time.
18 Giovanni Battista Sajanello (1760, 31) attributes the Crucifixion and lateral saints to a "Raphael of Verona," whom Luciano Rognini identified as Raffaello Torlioni. He was a member of the Accademia Filarmonica in Verona, and Rognini (1980–81, 150) suggests that his documented absences from this organization's activities in the years 1546–48 may have been due to his obligations as a painter. The sacristy paintings have also been attributed to Domenico Brusasorci because of the similarity of the Crucifixion to an altarpiece by him in the Cappella degli

Agonizzanti in San Fermo, Verona; see Zamperini 2008, 392–94. On the sacristy cycle more generally, see Dal Pozzolo 2006, 74–75, and Salomon et al. 2024, 92–93. Torlioni was also the patron of the church's later paintings by Veronese; see Gentili 2011.

19 One such representation of Jerome striking his chest while contemplating a crucifix is found in a medallion by an unknown sixteenth-century sculptor, in the inner frame of the portal of San Sebastiano, whose facade was finished in 1548. Within Lotto's oeuvre, paintings of the penitent Saint Jerome include paintings in Sibiu (Brukenthal National Museum, 1513–15), Allentown (Allentown Art Museum, Pennsylvania, 1515), Rome (Galleria Doria Pamphilj, 1549–50), and Madrid (Museo del Prado, 1553). Here I am following the chronology put forth by Dal Pozzolo 2021.

20 "Landulfus *De vita Christi*"; in "Libri che sono in libraria incatinati," 1535, S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 71, fasc. 2, fol. 22r, ASV; the full list is transcribed in the CD-ROM accompanying Bocchetta 2016 (no. II.b). Lists of Hieronymite books compiled by the Congregazione dell'Indice show that there was a 1510 edition of Ludolph's *Vita Christi* at Santa Maria Maddalena in Treviso and a 1495 edition at Santa Maria Maddalena, Padua, at the end of the sixteenth century. See Ricerca sull'Inchiesta della Congregazione dell'Indice (RICI), https://rici.vatlib.it, *elenco* 4828 (Treviso), no. 62, and *elenco* 5512 (Padua), no. 60. Ruggero Rugolo (2003, 228) cites the *Specchio di Croce*, a medieval Dominican devotional text by Domenico Cavalca (1270–1341) as a possible source for the Belo portrait.

21 On Ludolph's *Vita Christi* and the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, see Bodenstedt 1944, 24–26.

22 Ludolph of Saxony 2022, chap. 63 ("The Passion, Hour of Sext"), 204.

23 Ibid., 237–76.

24 Ibid., 257–59.

25 The Gospel verse is mentioned in Collareta 2011, 146.

26 Ludolph of Saxony 2022, chap. 64 ("The Passion, Hour of None"), 292.

27 The bare branches are commented upon in Miguel Falomir's entry in Dal Pozzolo and Falomir 2018, 330, no. 44. On Lotto's use of vegetation for symbolic purposes in the Sibiu *Saint Jerome*, see Corrain 2019.

28 See Martin 1993 and Firpo 2006.

29 Tafuri 1985, 90–101; Humfrey 1997, 111–15, 153; Prosperi 1997; Firpo 2001; R. Fontana 2007; and R. Fontana 2022.

30 Firpo 2001, 287–88; Moore Ede's entry in Campbell et al. 2008, 136, no. 28. See also Giammarioli 1983; Matthew 2007, 135–36; Zamperini 2013, 255; and Terzi 2020, 64–66.

31 Bocchetta 2016, 27.

32 The document is transcribed in B. Fontana 1892, 161–63.

33 Bocchetta 2016, 27.

34 "Constitutioni del 1541," S. Onofrio, MS S. Onofrio 67, fol. 6v, BNCR: "Essendo maximamente molte cose de le dette constitutione nostre antique per la longeza de tempi hormai quasi gitte in oblivione."

35 Nadin 2013.

36 Gobati 1775, 1:189–91; Nadin 2013, 23.

37 Messio 1552, fol. 15r.

38 Gobati 1775, 1:226–27.

39 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 33, letters from Daniele Villa in Rome to Gregorio Belo in Venice dated July 6, 13, 26, September 14, 21, 24, 27, October 2, 24, 31, December 20, 24, 27, 30, 1538; and January 2, 7, 22, 1539, ASV.

40 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 33, letters from Gregorio Belo in Venice to Bernardo de Biliolis in Treviso dated November 8, 28, December 26, 1538, and March 4, 1539, ASV.

41 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 24, proc. 348, "Memoriale de alcune diverse scripture," fols. 6v–7r, ASV; Nadin 2013, 32–36.

42 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 65, Scritture di S. Felicita da Romano, notarial instrument dated December 23, 1541, ASV. The four brothers named are Santo di Sant'Agata, Bernardo de Biliolis, Donino (Ruzino) da Brescia, and Gregorio de Sancto Urso. Nadin (2013, 36) states that the last of these is Gregorio Belo, but he is instead the "Gregorio da S.to Urso" who was *vicario* at Santa Felicita di Romano in 1535. See S. Maria Maddalena di Treviso, b. 7, proc. 139, "Capitoli generali antichi," meeting of April 26, 1535, Archivio di Stato di Treviso. Belo is referred to as "Gregorio vincentino" under "Venetia" in the same register, as noted above.

43 "Constitutioni del 1541," S. Onofrio, MS S. Onofrio 67, fol. 4r, BNCR; Bocchetta 2016, 26–27.

44 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 24, proc. 348, "Memoriale de alcune diverse scripture," fol. 7r, ASV; Gobati 1775, 1:243–44; Nadin 2013, 40.

45 Nadin 2013, 33–35.

46 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 34, fasc. B, copy of a letter of March 1, 1548 from the Venetian government to Pope Paul III, ASV: "così quanto alla ricompensa come circa il liberar questi Reverendi Frati del tutto dal disturbo, et molestia, che'l Messio non cessa ancor de dargli dopo tanto Tempo." Four more copies of this letter are found in S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 33.

47 Nadin 2013, 33–34.

48 "On the seventh day of the same [month] received from said brother Gregorio for the remainder, that he did not want to [give] more L 6 s –"; Lotto 2017, 173, fol. 52r: "adì 7 ditto die haver el dito fra Gregorio per resto che più non volse L 6 s –."

49 Nadin 2013, 49–55.

50 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 65, Scritture di S. Felicita da Romano, notarial instrument dated December 23, 1541, ASV: "patribus fratribus Sancto Bernardo Gregorio et Donino monasterii sancti Sebastiani Venetiarum."

51 The person who paid Lotto on Belo's behalf on October 11, 1547, Isidoro da Treviso, is similarly documented in Vicenza, Venice, and Treviso in the 1540s and 1550s.

52 S. Sebastiano (Venezia), Atti, b. 24, proc. 345.3, "Procure Varie del Monasterio di San Sebastian, 1541 fin 1599." For an overview of Veronese's work at San Sebastiano, see Gisolfi 2017, 132–46, and Salomon et al. 2024. On Belo in Cremona and Padua, see Giammarioli 1983, 120.

53 Binion 1990, 159.

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“Cast Over a Doublet”: A Military-Style Jerkin

DANIEL ROSEN

A late sixteenth-century garment in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 1) has since 1911 been identified as a doublet, a jacketlike men’s upper garment ubiquitous in Europe for much of the fifteenth through seventeenth century. For many decades the garment has been associated with fencing in particular, and costumers who modeled their designs after it thus identified their versions, too, as doublets for fencing.[1] The Met’s garment was most recently described as a fencing doublet in the 2022 exhibition catalogue for *The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England*.[2]

In his encyclopedia of heraldry of 1688, an attempt to record “etymologies, definitions, and historical observations . . . explicated and explained according to our modern language,” Randle Holme defined a doublet as “the whole

fig. 1 Jerkin. Western European, ca. 1580. Leather, silk, linen, cotton, horsehair, 30 × 23 ¾ × 14¼ in. (76.2 × 60.3 × 36.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bashford Dean Memorial Collection, Funds from various donors, 1929 (29.158.175)

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fig. 2 Back view of the proper right side of The Met's jerkin (fig. 1). Both side seams lace open and shut, allowing the wearer to pull the garment over the head.

covering for the upper part of the Man."[3] While the garment in The Met does fit this description, it does not meet other defined parameters of a doublet and indeed some of its features would have made it problematic for fencing. In this research note, I argue that the garment in figure 1 was not intended for use while fencing or training and is not a doublet at all. Instead, it would then—and should now—be called a jerkin. It was most likely worn as an expression of military-inspired fashion, as combat armor in its own right, or, perhaps, both.

Doublets and jerkins served different purposes: the former was capable of holding up legwear in lieu of a belt or suspenders, while the latter was unable to and was generally designed to be worn on top of a sleeved doublet and not in place of it. It must be recognized while pursuing the correct identification for a garment that language is always in development. Its fluidity in the period of the jerkin's creation does not always lend itself to satisfying categorization, though writers of the period took great pains to create order by recording their surroundings to build common understanding of the natural world and that which Holme referred to as the "Endeavours of Man."[4] The misidentification of The Met's jerkin has, through continued repetition over more than a century, taken on a type of unquestioned validity.

FEATURES

The jerkin was produced by professional tailors and a team of specialists, including embroiderers and button makers, whose intricate work would have clothed a high-end client. Although the jerkin's leather exterior has yet to be tested to identify the animal skin from which it is made, the material was likely treated with aluminum salts in a process called tawing, which results in a creamy white, tough surface.[5] There are areas on the sleeves that have begun to rip, revealing what appears to be a delamination of the hide's layers; this suggests that the aluminum salts may not have absorbed fully into the skin. The garment features several varieties of silk throughout its interior, several weights of flax linen in its internal structure, and twisted silk and metal threads in its heavy embroidery (the latter being strips of real silver wrapped around a silk core, which would have glittered in its early years). The entire jerkin is padded throughout with cotton fiber and horsehair; most men's upper garments of the period employed strategic padding to achieve a desired silhouette, much as modern men's suits use canvas and padding to support chest pieces, shoulders, lapels, and collars.

There is evidence that at one time the jerkin had thirty-six buttons; today, two are missing and three have been replaced with buttons of three different styles. Thirty-one are likely original and are made of thread stitched over a textile-covered wooden core. Only the five buttons on each sleeve are paired with buttonholes, whereas those along the center front of the jerkin are purely decorative, simulating a more typical front-opening garment. The jerkin opens from the collar to the bottom of the breast; everything below this point was permanently sewn shut by design.

Its "stomach" is stuffed to create what was known in the period as a peascod, which replicated the shape and curvature of a pea pod. The rationale for aspiring to this curious shape is unclear, although it is conjectured that it was inspired by the form of a metal breastplate intended to sweep aside weapon strikes. The intersection of the triangular peascod stomach and rounded lower garments visually narrows the waist. The extreme bulk and padding required to produce this fashionable shape do not, however, preclude a conventional center-front closure system. Many extant examples of surviving peascod jerkins and doublets are indeed center-front closing, though several include hidden ties to relieve pressure on straining buttons and to allow for greater ease in fastening.[6]

fig. 3 Hendrick Goltzius (German, 1558–1617). Detail of *Officer*, 1582. Engraving on paper, 10⅝ × 5⅞ in. (27 × 15 cm). Brown University Library, The Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection (242653). The sleeves of the officer's jerkin are attached approximately where the sleeves of The Met's jerkin tie on. Note the laces and loops where the sides fasten below the right arm and the jerkin's solid front.

In place of a front opening, both of the side seams of this jerkin come apart and are laced together with cords running through a series of stitched eyelets on both edges of the side seams, in the manner of a shoe (fig. 2). This side-fastening system means that to be worn, the garment was pulled over the head, not unlike a steel breastplate, and then laced shut to enclose the body and protect it or resemble a more conventional front-fastening garment. Alternatively, it could have been left open to jauntily drape over the body. The shoulder seams hinge like a clamshell to allow the jerkin to be put on and they are stitched over with what might be reinforcing leather strips to relieve the inherent repetitive stress on these seams.

Eight trapezoidal skirts, called laps, form a peplum around the waist. The two laps at the center front have a concave cutout that echoes the form of a fauld, where torso armor would join to hip and thigh protection. It is possible that the cutout accommodated the presence of a codpiece, the eye-catching accessory that served to cover the fly opening on some men's breeches during part of the period in which the garment was worn. Only one known artwork depicts a garment analogous to The Met's jerkin being worn in combination with a codpiece: an engraving made by Theodor de Bry in 1594, imagining Christopher Columbus's arrest in Santo Domingo in 1500, with the figures attired in the fashion of the last quarter of the sixteenth century.[7]

In silhouette, the jerkin closely follows the form of contemporary doublets.[8] However, it differs from the majority of extant doublets in the attachment of sleeves. The sleeves are only partially attached to the body of the garment with ties, utilizing pairs of matching fabric strips stitched with eyelets, rather than being sewn completely to the entire armscye of the garment as they would be on a doublet of the period. The strips that attach the sleeves only cover a small section of each armhole; the sleeves, when worn, would have revealed the armpit area. If the wearer's arms went through the garment's armholes, the partially affixed sleeves would have hung behind in a purely decorative fashion (see fig. 3). Furthermore, the sleeves could have been removed entirely to reveal the sleeves of the wearer's doublet underneath. For the purposes of correctly identifying this garment as a jerkin, perhaps its most important feature is the lack of any evidence of means to connect it to legwear (usually termed breeches or hose), a function doublets were specifically designed to perform.

Conservation work was performed at some points in this garment's life and the jerkin's collar and cuffs were decorated with anachronistic silk frills in more recent centuries. They may have been added to suggest the fine linen collars and cuffs common in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The cords used to fasten the breast, side seams, and sleeves, and the manner in which they are laced, may not be original to the jerkin.[9]

HISTORY AND PRESUMED FUNCTION

While the national origin of the jerkin in The Met is unclear, there are four other surviving garments that share most of its features (see fig. 4).[10] One is in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and the second is in the Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice.[11] The whereabouts of the third and fourth are unknown; the third was sold to a private collector by the auction house Bonhams in 2023 and the fourth was last listed in 1979 as forming part of the collection of Count Hans Wilczek.[12] There are at least twenty-four figures in known artworks dated between 1577 and 1598 wearing garments with the same features as The Met's jerkin,

	The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris	Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo, Venice	Private collection (sold by Bonhams, 2023)	Collection of Count Hans Wilczek (1979)
Can support breeches					unknown
Can attach sleeves	■				unknown
Pulls over the head	■	■	■	■	■
Opens at the sides	■	■	■	■	■
Reinforced shoulder seams	■	■	■	■	■
Concave cutout at waist	■				

fig. 4 Features of The Met's jerkin and the four surviving garments with stylistic similarities, identified by collection

notably sewn center-fronts and side fastenings, on top of their sleeved doublets.[13]

The interpretation of the jerkin in The Met has shifted significantly over time, with its first description as a pourpoint, or doublet, made by Bashford Dean as early as 1911 in a catalogue for a loan exhibition.[14] It was described as padding for armor in 1933, in 1942, and at least as recently as 1950.[15] It was reassessed in the 1990s by clothing historian Janet Arnold, who thought it could be a fencing doublet. The garment was most recently identified as a fencing doublet in 2022, in the exhibition catalogue *The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England* by The Met,[16] though this description largely draws both from Arnold's unpublished hypothesis from her visit to The Met and from her 1979 article "Two Early Seventeenth Century Fencing Doublets."[17] The article focused on two extant padded doeskin doublets (one in Germany and one in Scotland) that were hypothesized as being garments for fencing or livery. In it, Arnold only referred to The Met's garment once, as part of a brief list of other known extant padded doublets—but she did not link it with fencing. Both of the doublets that served as the focus for her article have eyelets at the waist for connecting to breeches, sewn-on sleeves, fully opening fronts, and sewn side seams.

The primary evidence given by Arnold connecting the doeskin doublets to fencing is tenuous, as it seems to rest on four figures out of more than two hundred in a 1611 German fencing manual written by Michael Hundt.[18] These four doublets have decorative lines over the chest and upper arms, reminiscent of those created by stitching and/or applied trim on some of the extant padded leather doublets and/or jerkins. Yet there are at least 196 fencers in the manual who wear garments that do not resemble the quilting on the aforementioned—or any of the other features of possible fencing doublets mentioned by Arnold's article. In many fencing and instruction manuals for soldiers of the period, effort was made to create variety in figures' garments.[19] Styles or surface embellishments were infrequently repeated. In Hundt's manual, ten fencers wear shirts alone and thirteen wear jerkins with hanging sleeves over their doublets, though these jerkins open down the front in the conventional manner.

The assumption that The Met's jerkin was intended for fencing otherwise relies mostly on its padding and on the existence of descriptions of quilted defensive garments worn by civilians. However, internal padding and structuring were not unusual in the period and were used to create the appearance of protruding stomachs, swollen hips, the codpiece, or engorged sleeves, styles that exemplify some of the shifts in fashion throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As noted in the *Tudors* catalogue, there are references to civilian doublets worn for protection against assailants or during duels—but there are many other extant upper garments with just as much, or perhaps more, padding than the garment in The Met. There are also several leather doublets with significantly less padding. There is no doubt that these augmentations might have created a somewhat peculiar air of bravado, but built-in cushioning or the use of impermeable leather may have nothing to do with a martial or protective purpose.[20]

Whether meant for combat or merely as a fashionable garment, the jerkin has features that might have actually made it less effective for defense, especially if not worn over a doublet. Its waist laps overlap back over

front, rather than front over back, which might have encouraged a blade to slip into the stomach or intestines rather than guide it away from the body. This may, however, have something to do with the manner in which the skirts overlap at its side openings, where some of the skirts project past the edge of the garment's body to cover the gap between the front and back when the sides are laced shut. If the jerkin was worn over a shirt alone, the open armpits would provide deadly access to the axillary artery or an unprotected pathway toward vital organs. While partially attached sleeves could certainly allow for excellent range of motion, this does not seem to be a normal feature of combat wear and is not evidenced in images or extant garments.

In 2023, the garment in The Met was reidentified as a jerkin following two examinations by the author that raised doubt about its function as a fencing doublet. This correction led to inclusion of the jerkin in the revised 2023 edition of Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion 3: The Content, Cut, Construction, and Context of European Men's and Women's Dress c. 1560–1620*, which updated and expanded Arnold's volume of 1985. Termed a "Padded Leather Jerkin with a Peascod Belly and Sleeves," its description recognizes that the "absence of a waistband [any means of connecting to breeches] on this pattern indicates that this is a jerkin, not a doublet . . . it is quite possible that this jerkin was a military fashion more than a sporting one and was worn for protection by a 'knight in combat' . . . or a man in armed conflict."[21]

fig. 5 Possibly Jacob van der Heyden (Flemish, 1573–1645). Detail of *Landscape with Loving Couple*, showing a doublet and breeches tied together with points, 1608–18. Engraving on paper, 3⅝ × 5⅜ in. (9.3 × 13.7 cm). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Purchased with the support of the F.G. Waller-Fonds (RP-P-1996-30)

DEFINING A JERKIN

A jerkin, often identified as a "Iackett without sleues,"[22] is largely classified as a garment that was meant to serve as a visible outer layer atop a doublet, worn for fashion, warmth, or both.[23] A 1623 novel described the doublet of a gentleman "vpon which he had a Buffe [leather] Ierkin,"[24] while traveler Fynes Moryson, writing in 1617 of being robbed, notes that he had "a Ierkin and hose laide with gold lace, yet they were content to take onely the inner dublet."[25] The doublet would be worn, much like suit jackets of the modern era, over a shirt.[26] It was the desire of priest William Bathe to make his multilingual collection of proverbs, published three years after his death in 1614, be "as portable as might be . . . to be carried twixt ierkin and doublet."[27]

While the jerkin and doublet might have much in common in their design and construction, they diverge in their ability to support breeches (worn at or near the body's natural waist, where the body bends but lacks a means, such as hips, to conveniently hold them up). This supporting function was usually achieved with "points," or cords, tied through matching holes in the doublet and the waistband of the breeches (see fig. 5) or, later on, with large hooks and loops made of metal wire. *Pourpoint*, a French word for doublet, was derived from that crucial feature: "the doublet is maad with poynynges For whi it is cleped [called] a purpoynt."[28] Books using everyday scenarios to teach English, much as foreign-language textbooks do today, can be especially helpful in understanding how garments were meant to interact or be combined. The British merchant George Mason set the scene of getting dressed in the morning in his 1633 book of English grammar: "warme my shirt . . . Giue me my doublet. hosen. shooes. pointes, cloake."[29]

When joined together, doublet and breeches functioned much like modern coveralls in the way they are put on and taken off by stepping through the front opening. One could put on or take off items of clothing a piece at a time, as when a knight in Robert Anton's chivalric story of 1613, *Moriomachia*, "vntrussed his poynts,

fig. 6 Workshop of Jacob de Gheyn II (Dutch, 1565–1629). Detail of a soldier from *Wapenhandelinghe van Roers Musquetten ende Spiessen* (The Exercise of Arms), 1597–1607. Engraving on paper, hand colored, 14⅛ × 10¼ in. (36 × 26 cm). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (NG-2016-65-8). The soldier wears a green mandilion over a yellow doublet; the mandilion's back panel (shaded in gray) is visible and displays an indent at the doublet's waist seam. If fastened, the mandilion would fit like a jerkin.

put off his Doublet, snatcht vp his breeeches by the sides."[30] One could also mix and match pieces so long as holes lined up, or, as the lexicographer John Florio defined the Italian term *discioláre* in English in 1611: "put off hose and doublet without vndoing points."[31] There was no single, fixed methodology. There also existed real concern over breeches falling should the points connecting them to the doublet fail. William Shakespeare conjured this image several times in his works. In *Henry IV*, as Falstaff describes being robbed on the road, Poins interrupts his description of "Their points being broken—" with "Down fell their hose."[32] In *Twelfth Night*, Maria notes that if points break, "your gaskins [breeches] fall."[33]

There is no evidence that The Met's jerkin ever included any means of supporting legwear as the *Tudors* catalogue entry assumes;[34] there is nothing visible to the naked eye nor in the X-radiographs taken by The Met that hint at the presence of any such feature.[35] Such signs might include perforations or punctures in the garment's material from sewn-in components being removed or torn away, stray threads, residue from rotted cloth, stains from oxidized metal hooks or loops, distortion in the lining fabric from the weight of breeches, or abraded cloth where breeches or points would have rubbed. Evidence of this feature, which would be expected in a doublet, is also missing in the comparable extant examples sold by Bonhams, in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and in the Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo, indicating they too would have been worn as the outermost layer, unattached to lower garments, and would therefore, by definition, be called jerkins.

Jerkins can sometimes be found hiding in plain sight in artworks. When it is buttoned all the way up over a doublet, a jerkin might take on the appearance of a single garment with dissimilar materials used for the sleeves and the body. This confusion was equally present in the period of its popularity, as when a jerkin is mistaken for a doublet in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.[36] John Hart, an educator who worked to standardize the English language, offers an additional clue in his *A Methode or Comfortable Beginning for All Vnlearned* (1570).[37] In its pages there is an isolated image of a sleeveless jerkin matching a type frequently seen in being worn over a doublet in artworks.[38]

When sleeves were present in jerkins, they were often ornamental and only partially attached. In 1583 the critic of excessive apparel Phillip Stubbes listed some details of outerwear, including jerkins and mandilions, could include: they might be "buttened downe the brest, some vnder the arme [at the sides] . . . some with great sleeues, some with small, and some with non at all."[39] Men in the procession for King James I's accession to the English throne in 1603 had liveries of "blew coates with sleeves . . . buttoned behinde in jerkin fashion, and white doublets."[40]

The Museo Stibbert in Florence has a hybrid garment that was designed to have removable sleeves like The Met's jerkin, but is also capable of supporting breeches, having strips stitched with eyelets around its waist.[41] It may have been meant to simulate the look of a jerkin over a doublet as a compromise to minimize heat or bulk. Florio may have defined this as a *giúbba*, or "a trusse, a sleeuelesse doublet, ierkin, jacket, or mandillion."[42] The Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds has a buffcoat, a type of armor made of oil-tanned leather, with "a band fitted with iron eyes [loops] intended to engage hooks on the breeches," which would eliminate the need for a doublet that would be hidden anyway.[43]

MANDILIONS

By the very end of the sixteenth and into the early seventeenth centuries, the jerkin seems to have branched off into, or at least become significantly linked to, the mandilion. Both garments were generally intended to be worn over a doublet. Put simply, a mandilion's form

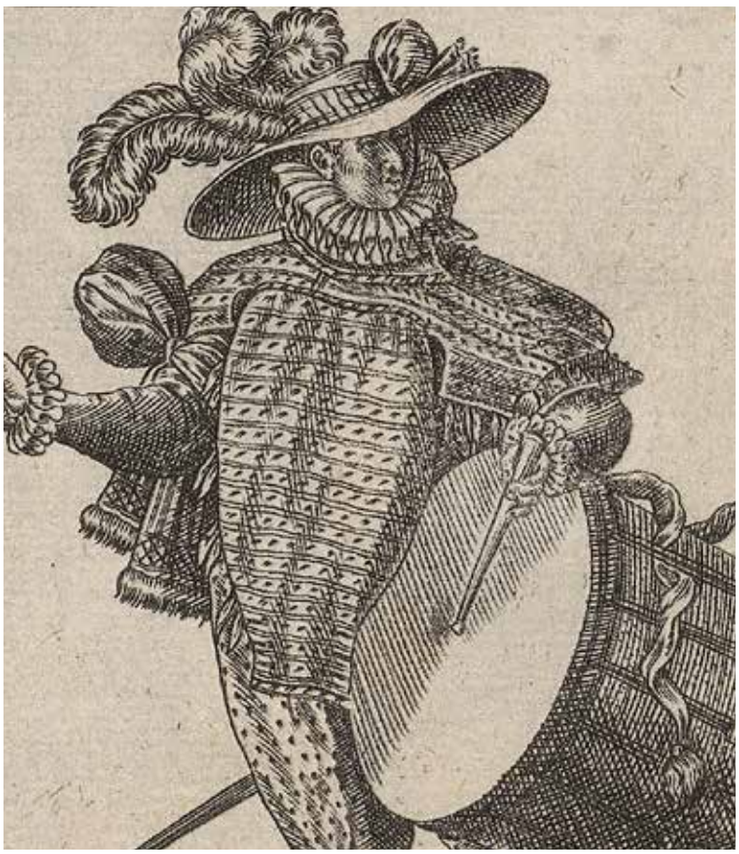

fig. 7 Abraham de Bruyn (Flemish, 1540–1587). Detail of a drummer from *Soldiers, Dressed in the Fashion of ca. 1580*, showing the jerkin or mandilion worn sideways with one of the sleeves draping over the torso, 1581. Engraving on paper, 10⅜ × 14⅛ in. (26.5 × 36 cm). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (BI-1895-3811-23)

can be created by eliminating the waist seam of a jerkin like that in The Met and by reducing the internal padding to create a slimmer silhouette (see fig. 6). Like The Met's jerkin, mandilions slip over the head, open at the side seams, lack any means of connecting to breeches, and have decorative hanging sleeves. Mandilions were described by Holme as being "a kind of loose Coat worn upon a *Dublet* either *Buttoned* or *open*: and much in use in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth* [r. 1558–1603]: It had no Sleeves, but two *broad Wings* on the Shoulders, and hanging Sleeves at the Back: with side *Skirts*, or *Laps*."[44] Elsewhere he depicted a man "cloathed with . . . [a] Doublet . . . overcast with a hanging or loose Coat, with the Sleeves hanging backwards, Gules. This kind of loose Coat with hanging sleeves cast over a Doublet . . . was in the Reign of Q. *Elizabeth* termed a Mandilion, which is a loose Cassock [coat], such as her Soldiers used to wear."[45] The 1620 translation to English of the second part of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* likewise linked the analogous garments under discussion together, describing "[A] woman . . . clad in a man's habit . . . with a loose Cassocke or Ierkin . . . opened on both sides, vnder which she had also a Doublet."[46] Fitted mandilions, with flat fronts, appeared around 1600 and became especially popular into the 1620s. This coincides with a significant shift in the shape of doublets, away from padded stomachs to flatter fronts, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.[47] Indeed, The Met's jerkin might have been alternatively referred to as a mandilion in its own time. Given their manner of wearing over a doublet and their other features in common, it is no surprise that the same word might be used to describe both; Florio translated the word *cassacchino* to "a mandillion . . . a ierkin."[48]

Wars raged through Europe during the decades that followed the Protestant Reformation in the early sixteenth century as Catholic powers sought to reclaim territories that had shifted toward Protestant ideologies. These conflicts and the accompanying civil unrest led to increased interest in military topics and the genuine need to prepare for action; many gentlemen were inspired to write treatises promoting their theories on all aspects of war. These authors were no armchair warriors, and had themselves served professionally as soldiers—some, such as Sir John Smythe, fought for both Catholic and Protestant causes—and so applied their broad experience to their recommendations for battle. This often included advice on what an ideal equipment loadout looked like, and several authors described the specific purpose of side-opening garments in the fashion of the jerkin in The Met. Smythe instructed that soldiers should wear "dublets . . . [and] they should haue euerie one of them a saltenberg, commonly called a Mandilion . . . to encouer and keepe drie their flasks and touchboxes [gunpowder containers] and the pans and touchholes of their harquebuzes [firearms] in the time of wet & moist weather."[49] Edward Davies, another commentator with "long continuance in the warres," wrote in 1619 of a similar garment "which may shield both his flaske, tutch-box, his match [fuse] and peece [firearms] from raine if need be,"[50] as did the mercenary of fourteen years William Garrard: "for hys Peece . . . hee must keepe the same from wette vnder hys Arme-hoale."[51] Johann Jacob von Wallhausen, military adviser to the Dutch Republic, instructed in 1621 that musketeers should keep their match dry by keeping it under their cassock, suggesting a similar garment.[52]

Having openable side seams permitted garments like The Met's jerkin to be oriented sideways when worn. The sleeves or armholes would be rotated to the front and back of the body and the original front and back of the garment would be oriented sideways, covering the arms instead. This manner of wearing can be seen on both rigid jerkins, with seemingly no impediment to movement (fig. 7), and on less structured

mandilions.[53] The fashion seems to have been favored by military men, who perhaps sought to portray themselves as daring by purposefully negating the function of the garment. Only two figures, a drummer and an officer, out of the twenty-four late sixteenth-century artistic depictions mentioned above show a jerkin being worn sideways, but both are heavily padded like The Met's jerkin, suggesting that it, too, could have been worn sideways without impeding the wearer.

CONCLUSION

The sixteenth-century jerkin in The Met represents an unusual category of garment that straddles the line between civilian and soldierly contexts; perhaps it was meant to serve as armor, or perhaps not. While its purpose may have indeed been to defend the body, there is in fact little evidence that points to its specific use in any sort of fencing, sporting, or training activity. The features common to The Met's jerkin and its four stylistic relatives across Europe meet the criteria for jerkins in that they would be fashionably worn as the outermost layer of one's apparel and lack any feature to interface with and support breeches, a function performed by doublets. For these reasons, I believe that the garment has been misidentified as a doublet for many decades. That its sleeves are only able to attach a fraction of the way around the arm and can be removed entirely, and that the other four extant jerkins are without any ability to include sleeves, further reinforces the idea that these garments were intended to be worn over another garment with its own sleeves. Images showing their use among fighting men further clarifies the context for the jerkins: they were, at the least, meant to emulate military attire, if not also to serve a very real function by protecting the body.

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NOTES

1 At the time of writing, the author has found fourteen different costumers or shops selling their interpretations of the garment. Other interpretations can be found among martial artists who practice historical swordsmanship.
2 Sarah Bochicchio in Cleland and Eaker 2022, 242–43, no. 100.
3 "Terms Used by Taylors," in "The Third Book of the Academy of Armory and Blazon," Holme 1688, chap. 3, 95. While his work was published later in the seventeenth century, many of its thorough entries describe earlier fashion and generally agree with descriptions of garments written in the time of their wearing decades earlier.
4 "The Third Book of the Academy of Armory and Blazon," Holme 1688, chap. 1, 1.
5 Vest 1999, 67–68.
6 See the 1580/1600 doublet in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, T4256.
7 Theodor de Bry, "Columbus wirdt mit seiner Bruder Bartholomeo gefänglich in Hispanien geschickt," University of Houston Special Collections, https://id.lib.uh.edu/ark:/84475/do5153jz453de, first published in Benzoni 1594, pl. XIII.
8 Arnold 1971.
9 Arnold et al. 2023, 35.
10 Grancsay 1933, 111. It was perhaps presumed that the jerkin is French because it belonged to Baron Antoine Fernand Vidal de Léry of Paris before its sale to Bashford Dean; however, its origins are unknown.
11 Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 2018.41.1; the garment's buttons appear to have been replaced in later centuries. Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo, Venice, Cl. XXIV n. 1736.
12 Bonhams sale, Paris, November 22, 2023, lot 184. The garment may have been extensively altered in the centuries after its creation as its shoulder wings appear to have been removed and replaced backward. The other garment's inclusion in the collection of Count Hans Wilczek is noted in Arnold 1979; its present whereabouts are unknown, and it was last discussed in detail, with illustrations, in *Costüm-Ausstellung* 1891, 4 (under pl. 12),

Hilfstafel pl. 3, and pl. 12A. It is unclear whether this garment could connect to breeches, but it must have slipped over the head and fastened at the side seams as it too lacks a front opening below the breast. The text (ibid., 4 [under pl. 12]) mentions "aus denen enge Aermel von anderem Stoffe hervortreten," or "from which narrow sleeves made of other material emerge," likely meaning that it was meant to be worn over a sleeved doublet as the others. The pattern taken from the garment (ibid., Hilfstafel pl. 3) includes neither sleeves nor strips to attach them, nor does it include a means of linking to breeches.

13 These figures are cavalrymen, conquistadors, drummers, knights, musketeers, officers, and flag bearers. See the sixteenth-century *Portrait of a Gentleman* by an unknown artist, Astley Cheetham Art Gallery, Stalybridge, ASTAC1932.1; the 1566 *Portrait of Cristofaro Callori, Knight of the Order of Malta* by an artist of the Tuscan School, sold by Sotheby's, Milan, December 15, 2009; engravings by Hans Collaert (RP-P-OB-79.008), Abraham de Bruyn (RP-P-OB-26.951, BI-1895-3811-25, and BI-1895-3811-23), and Hendrick Goltzius (RP-P-OB-10.197), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; engravings by Hendrick Goltzius, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library, Providence, 242634, 242643, 242653; *Image of Three Arquebusiers*, likely by Abraham de Bruyn, Vinkhuijzen collection of military uniforms, New York Public Library, 8-MMEH; *Portrait of Keimpe van Donia*, attributed to Adriaen van Cronenburg, Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague, 250449; *A Soldier with an Arquebus*, engraving by Jacob de Gheyn II, Princeton University Art Museum, x1934-623; details from Girolamo Benzoni's *Americae pars quarta* (1594, 25, 35) and *Americae pars quinta* (1595, 103, 107), John Carter Brown Library, Providence, 09887, 35291; details from Theodor de Bry's *Narratio regionum indicarum per Hispanos quosdam deuastatarum verissima* (1598, 40, 47, 50, 55, 59), Library of Congress, Washington, DC, F1411 .C462.

14 Dean 1911, 28, no. 46.

15 Grancsay 1933, 111–12; Edson 1942, 20–21; Grancsay 1950, 184.

16 Bochicchio in Cleland and Eaker 2022, 242–43, no. 100.

17 Arnold 1979, 107–20.

18 Hundt 1611, 35, 54, 70.

19 For example, each of the 117 soldiers illustrated in Jacob de Gheyn's *Wapenhandelinghe van Roers Musquetten ende Spiessen* (The Exercise of Arms) is attired at least slightly differently from the others. These instructions were used to reform the Dutch Republic's military. See Gheyn (1607) 2003.

20 See the 1567 leather doublet in the Skattkammaren Museum, Uppsala, D10411; and the 1621 leather doublet in the Museum Rotterdam, 20535-1.

21 Arnold et al. 2023, 35, 107.

22 Thynne (1598) 1876, 31. Throughout this research note I retain the original spelling of all sources quoted.

23 For more information on doublets, refer to Malcolm-Davies and Mikhaila 2022, 86–87 and 96–97.

24 Alemán 1623, 158.

25 Moryson 1617, 185.

26 Rider 1606, 972.

27 Bathe 1617, "Advertisement," [241].

28 Guillaume de Deguileville (14th century) 1985, 51.

29 Mason 1633, 66.

30 Anton 1613, 15.

31 Florio 1611, 151.

32 *Henry IV*, act II, scene IV; Shakespeare (1597) 1975, 436.

33 *Twelfth Night*, act I, scene V; Shakespeare (1597) 1975, 76.

34 Cleland and Eaker 2022, 242.

35 It must be noted that the jerkin is too fragile to be taken off its display armature. The assessment was made by looking up from the garment's bottom at the space between the armature and the interior of the garment, and by lifting some of the waist laps. The absence of a means for supporting legwear is confirmed in three of the four stylistically similar extant jerkins described above.

36 *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act II, scene IV: "VALENTINE: I quote it in your jerkin. / THURIO: My jerkin is a doublet." Shakespeare (1590–94) 1975, 110.

37 Hart and Heralt 1570, 14.

38 See, for example, *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*, a portrait after Steven van der Meulen, National Trust, Montacute House, Somerset, 597956; and *Portrait of a Young Man*, artist unknown, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1961.9.79.

39 "A Peculiare Discription of Apparell in Algna by Degrees: The Varytie of Coates and Ierkins," in Stubbes 1583, unpaginated.

40 Sir Robert Cecil, letter to the council, April 29, 1603, in Kingston 1906, 101. The description of the garments "with sleeves . . . buttoned behind" might mean the sleeves' cuffs would be buttoned together to keep them from flapping loosely. This appears to be the case for the officer leading infantry at the bottom right of Adam Willaerts's painting *Victory over the Spanish near Gibraltar by a Fleet Commanded by Admiral Jacob van Heemskerck, 25 April 1607*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-1387.

41 Arnold et al. 2023, 38, 110. Museo Stibbert, Florence, 193.

42 Florio 1611, 212.

43 Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds, III.1956 A.

44 "The Several Parts of a Boys and Girls Coat," in "The Third Book of the Academy of Armory and Blazon," Holme 1688, chap. 2, 18.

45 "The Liberties and Priveledges of the Commons," in "The Third Book of the Academy of Armory and Blazon," Holme 1688, chap. 3, 71.

46 Cervantes 1620, 327.

47 See two silk doublets in The Met: MMA 1989.196 and 23.30.3.

48 Florio 1611, 85.

49 Smythe 1594, 188.

50 Davies 1619, 25.

51 Garrard 1591, 4.

52 Wallhausen 1621, 55: " . . . kan sie trucken halten vnd bewahren / entweder vnder seiner Cosack oder schützen Rock." Translated for the author by Katherine Barich. For more of her work, see Barich and McNealy 2015.

53 See the engraving by Abraham de Bruyn, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, BI-1895-3811-25, and the musketeer in pale blue at the bottom right of Adam Willaerts's 1617 painting mentioned in note 40 above, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-1387.

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A Pair of Galician Torah Finials

RIVA ARNOLD

The Metropolitan Museum of Art recently acquired a rare, ornate set of partially gilded Torah finials fashioned with openwork scrolls set with rubies, emeralds, and pearls. Crafted to ornament a Torah, which includes the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, this intricate ensemble with floral and animal embellishments blends Rococo and Neoclassical elements and was made in Galicia during the second half of the eighteenth century. The exquisite execution of the sacred objects speaks to the rich history of Eastern European Jewry (fig. 1).[1] Galician finials are relatively small in size and do not bear silver marks, as is the case with the earliest example, dating to 1763, now in the Jewish Museum, New York.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Galicia (comprising parts of present-day Ukraine and Poland, also known as

fig. 1 Pair of Torah finials (*Rimmonim*). Austrian (Galicia; part of present-day Poland/Ukraine), 1775–90. Silver, partially gilded, rubies, emeralds, freshwater pearls, enamel, colored glass, H. 6½ in. (16.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Dina Axelrad Perry and Ruth and Andrew Suzman Gifts, 2023 (2023.732.1,.2)

Metropolitan Museum Journal, volume 60, 2025. Published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with the University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.1086/739640. © 2025 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

fig. 2 Isidor Kaufmann (Hungarian, 1854–1921). *Portal of the Rabbi*, 1898. Oil on canvas. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest (1692)

fig. 3 Alois Breyer (Austrian, 1885–1948). Interior view of the Wooden Synagogue in Khodoriv (Chodorów), 1910–13. Albumen print, 13⅜ × 19⅜ in. (34 × 49 cm). Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Gift of Alois Breyer, Baden bei Wein, 1937 (445)

Minor Poland) was under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Cities such as Kraków and Lviv (formerly Lemberg) were known for their centers of scholarship, goldsmithing, and international trade. Galicia endured multiple political challenges, with three geographic partitions between Austria, Russia, and Prussia in 1772, 1793, and 1795 that led to widespread destruction. Consequently, Judaica from Galicia provides a glimpse of the vibrancy of Jewish communities before they were mostly erased by World War II. This article elaborates on the cultural identity and significance of these decorative works of art that bore witness to this period of Jewish history and explores how they relate to broader aesthetic influences in Eastern Europe.

Galician Jewish culture periodically flourished despite years of societal segregation as a religious minority. The community created important works of religious architecture with vibrant polychrome interiors as seen in Isidor Kaufmann's painting of the Gwoździec synagogue from 1898 (fig. 2) and in a photograph taken by Alois Breyer in 1910 of Chodorów synagogue ceiling covered with animal forms and Hebrew phrases (fig. 3). Galicia fostered centers of culture and craftsmanship and experienced some economic prosperity over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, this pair of finials is an enigma and lacks documentation to answer key questions about its history, as Jewish records from this period were mostly destroyed.[2] The commissioning parties remain unidentified but we know that the French branch of the Rothschild family eventually acquired them. Interestingly, a tax mark for Kraków dated 1806–7 appears at the base of the finials, documenting its last known location before being found in France. Many of the objects that survive from this region were removed from their original settings and later entered public and private collections across Europe, Israel, and the United States. They are not only an expression of faith but also embodiments of the aesthetic traditions of Galician Jewry and craftsmanship.

Richly decorated Torah ritual objects used to dress Torah scrolls are rooted in symbolism and ceremonial significance. Traditionally, the suite includes a crown, finials, breastplate, binder, protective case or cover, and *yad* (pointer), all intended to highlight the sacredness of the Torah (fig. 4). In Ashkenazic, Italian, and Sephardic communities each scroll is adorned with silver ritual items reflecting individual styles and the place of production. The finials known in Hebrew as *Rimmonim* are placed upon the wooden staves. *Rimmonim* translates to the plural of "pomegranate," a fruit that has multiple associations within Jewish history and its liturgy. The

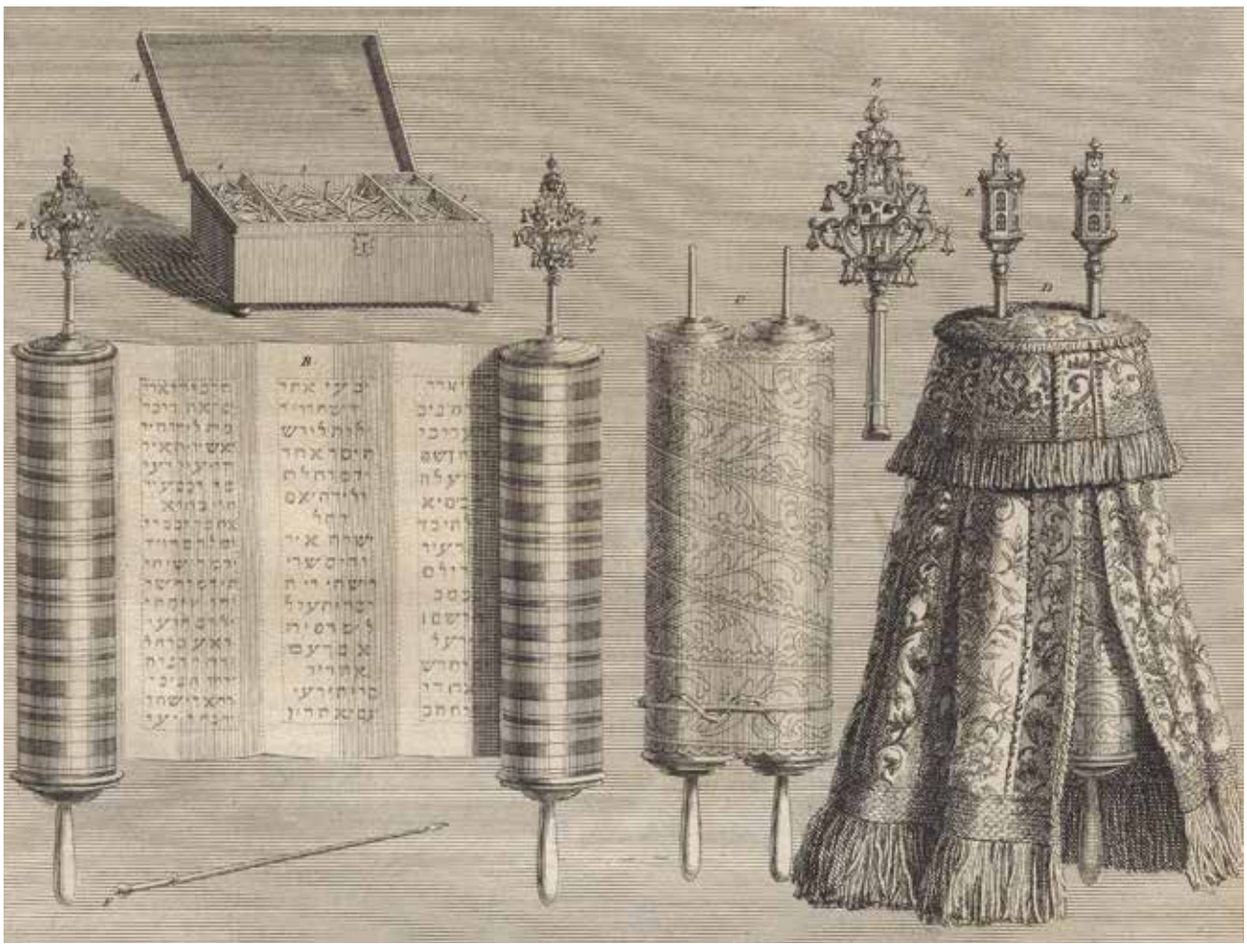

fig. 4 Bernard Picart (French, 1673–1733). *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, 1723. Open Torah scroll with finials, Torah scroll with binder, Torah finial, and Torah scroll with mantle. Engraving. Thomas J. Watson LIbrary, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

first alludes to the shape of the bells worn on the clothing of the high priest's robes, and a second reference is found in the First Book of Kings, where the Temple architecture incorporated pomegranates into the design.[3] The Talmud contains a third citation: "to be full of good deeds like pomegranates are full of seeds." The Torah staves are known in Hebrew as *Etz hayim*, or Tree of Life, which refers to a quotation in Proverbs 3:18, "She is a tree of life to those who grasp her; and whoever holds on to her is happy." The Torah scrolls are dressed in their ornaments and stored in the ark, a distinctive cabinet in the synagogue sanctuary. During the worship service a scroll is removed from the ark and undressed so that a portion may be read aloud. Following the reading, the Torah is again covered in its finery and promenaded throughout the sanctuary before being returned to the ark.

Each finial measures 16.5 centimeters in height and is constructed from silver, partially gilded. Their petit size could indicate that they were created for a small scroll for private family use or for a modest synagogue congregation. While they resemble the shape of candlesticks commonly found in Eastern and Central Europe, finials from Galicia have unique decorative and structural compositions. They are generally small with broad, flat spherical bases and a column topped with a central knob. The surface ornamentation incorporates animal forms and floral embellishments. The artistic execution of the finials may be situated within the broader regional aesthetic influences of Poland and Ukraine, making Galicia a confluence of cultures, merchants, and goldsmiths from the Ottoman Empire and Central Europe. Gold and silver were brought from Nuremberg, Gdańsk, Lvov, Warsaw, and Augsburg. Galician crafts and goldsmithing, including ornate weaponry and jewelry, were greatly influenced by these sources, and the region became a center of trade and a locus of artistic exchange.[4] Jewish émigrés from across Europe also contributed to the evolution and design of synagogue objects and interiors.

The Met's finials are also noteworthy for their translation of ornament and metalwork techniques, and especially for the addition of precious gemstones that distinguish them from the more modest examples

found in the collections of the Jewish Museums of New York, Prague, Vienna, Warsaw, and Budapest (fig. 5). The surfaces of the finials are finely chased with rocailles and blossoms that highlight the craftsmanship of the region and carry the heritage of Galician goldsmithing. The finial tops comprise a coronet shape replete with openwork and embellished with pearls, emeralds, and rubies forming a decorative crown. The finial columns have elaborate surfaces forming an intricate casing. A symbolic Tree of Life emerges from a tiered vase with rubies, emeralds, and scrolling floral blossoms. At the foot of the shaft is a pair of birds or phoenixes with dramatic wings and elongated necks, facing in opposite directions. Three richly decorated tiers form a stepped base. A frieze of animals is formed by chasing. On the second level a laurel garland is achieved through repoussé, and in the third, openwork scrolls are set with emeralds, rubies, and pearls with an enameled silver foliate of bejeweled flowers.

It is possible that the finials were created for a prominent rabbi or family member. A small Torah crown with diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds provides an example of rabbinical patronage now housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (fig. 6). The crown is linked to a well-known rabbi of Galicia, Yisrael Friedman of Ruzhin (1797–1850), who was the leader of a Hasidic court. Hasidism, a religious movement that developed in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century, is dedicated to a strict observance of Jewish law, ritual, and spirituality, and shuns modernity.[5] The Hasidic courts, or dynasties, expanded into devout communities of followers numbering in the thousands and comprised the majority of the Jewish population in Eastern Europe, spreading into present-day Poland, Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine.[6] This crown was owned by one of the sons of Yisrael Friedman of Ruzhin. According to the family's oral history, a small crown was commissioned for each of the Ruzhin male heirs, although the other examples are missing.[7] Although it is difficult to know the extent to which Hasidic communities commissioned lavish Torah ornaments, there are other objects that speak to the richness of materiality and craftsmanship. For example, *shpanyer arbet* is a special textile made by male Jewish artisans for the Jewish community using a technique of braiding and lacework with gold and silver threads.[8] These rectangular pieces sewn onto men's prayer shawls and yarmulkes and women's head coverings and bodices expand our understanding of the importance of certain religious textiles within the Hasidic community that are mostly unknown to secular society today.[9]

fig. 5 Torah finials. Austrian (Galicia; part of present-day Poland/Ukraine). Late 18th–early 19th century. Silver, chased and cast, each: 7⅝ × 3⅛ in. (18.5 × 9.4 cm). Jewish Museum, New York, Purchase: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Gruber (JM 30-64a-b)

Both the V&A Torah crown and The Met's finials are distinguished by their large number of pearls, rubies, and emeralds. Beginning in the fifteenth century, Lviv and other cities in Galicia maintained trade relations with other European centers as well as with Asia and the Middle East. This arrangement was most likely enabled by the Armenian merchants who played a crucial role in the gem trade between the East and West.[10] The Armenians held favorable social and economic affiliations with the Galician Jewish community for centuries and established ports of trade in Venice and Livorno, connecting with Russia, Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and India.[11] They also set up trading networks with Sephardic merchants in the eighteenth century, creating a market of silk and gems from India.[12] The global trade of emeralds began in the sixteenth century, whereas pearls may have been sourced as early as the fifteenth century and obtained locally.[13] Jewish workshops and goldsmiths employed outside the guilds probably acquired precious gemstones from Christian ateliers. It is also possible that gems were repurposed from jewelry and reset for Judaica objects. The tradition of using stones is referenced throughout the Hebrew Bible and is a valuable source for connecting aspects of Judaica to liturgy, symbolism, and meaning. For example, in Exodus 28:9–21, the *hoshen* (breastplate), a symbol of the twelve tribes worn by the high priest, includes an emerald and ruby (fig. 7).[14]

The animal imagery on the bases of the finials is mostly sourced from Hebrew mystical and spiritual texts including the Hebrew Bible, Psalm 104, Talmud, Mishneh Torah, and *Perek Shira*, among others that

fig. 6 Torah crown. Vienna, ca. 1825. Gold and silver with diamonds, emeralds, rubies, amethysts, turquoise, 7⅛ × 4⅞ × 3⅛ in. (18.2 × 12.5 × 7.8 cm). Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Loan: Gilbert. 68:1, 2-2008)

fig. 7 Title page of Marbode, Bishop of Rennes, *De gemmarum lapidum[que]*, 1539. High priest with breastplate or *hoshen*, showing the gemstones symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel. Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections, Carlisle, Pennsylvania (SC-Norris 553.8 M312)

feature the Creation story and descriptions of the animal kingdom and botanical world. Animal motifs on ceremonial objects and in synagogue spaces helped to circulate knowledge of Hebrew texts. The Met's finials were tax-marked in Kraków, a hub of Hebrew printing in Eastern Europe.[15] Galicia had been a center of Talmudic scholarship since the sixteenth century, and Jewish-owned printing houses served the community by producing a variety of Hebrew books. One of the more interesting, lesser-known Jewish texts is *Perek Shira*, a source of poetic stanzas attributed to King David. Most of the hymns in *Perek Shira* are found in Psalms and the text is intended to honor creation (earth, sky, sea, plants, and animals) and all its celestial realms. It was known as a manuscript since the medieval period and was first printed in Venice in 1576 and in Poland in 1651, with later editions produced in Yiddish.[16] Aniconic representations are not only seen in synagogues or on ritual objects, but also on tombstones, textiles, and printed material, resulting in a distinctive artistic style. It is possible that *Perek Shira* influenced the shape of the finials, given the many hymns dedicated to animals and its wide circulation; however, without secure evidence, the wider corpus of Hebrew texts should be considered.

The uppermost part of the finial is an openwork crown with rubies and emeralds. A main correlation between crown imagery in Judaica and textual sources is the Ethics of Our Fathers, a book of wisdom and Jewish ethics that dates to the third century. Chapter 4:13 mentions that there are three crowns: a crown of the Torah (a reference to the Jewish law and Hebrew Bible), a crown of the priesthood (a connection to the biblical Temple), and the royal crown (a king who governs the people, such as King David or King Solomon). The crown is a symbolic image and ritual object of majesty evoking the sovereignty of God over the Jewish people.

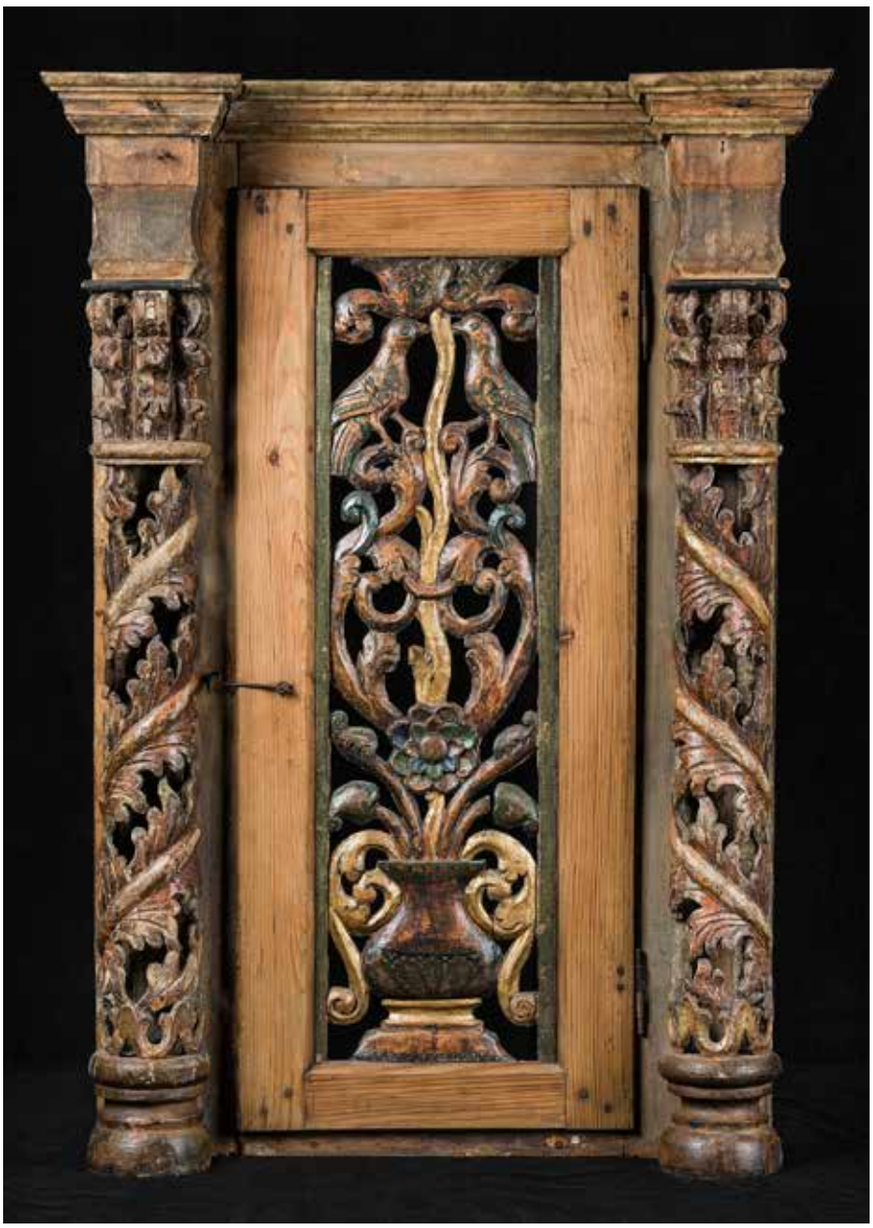

fig. 8 Torah ark. Poland, 18th century. Wood, 46½ × 32⅝ in. (118 × 83 cm). National Museum in Kraków (MNK IV-Sp-527)

The middle section of the finial is a cylinder-shaped column in a molded frame encased with pierced ornament forming vases sprouting blossoms with rubies and emeralds. References to the Tree of Life in Proverbs and Genesis are commonly used as motifs on Torah arks, ritual objects, works on paper, and textiles. The first mention of the tree is in Genesis 2:8–9: "God planted a garden in Eden, in the east" . . . "with the tree of life in the middle of the garden." The blossoming vase is an interpretation of this imagery. The reference also relates to the Hebrew phrase sung by Jewish congregants during the removal and return of the Torah as referenced in Proverbs 3:18.[17] In the Tanakh section of Prophets, the tree can also serve as a metaphor for the Jewish people: "for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people" (Isaiah 65:22). The recurrence of the tree represents its significance in the Hebrew Bible and inevitably was integrated by goldsmiths and craftsmen into their designs, as seen in a wooden Torah ark from eighteenth-century Poland now in the National Museum in Kraków (fig. 8).

At the base of The Met's finials is an array of animals including lion faces bordered with circular bands with alternating pearls and stones (fig. 9). The birds and wildlife are placed in a nonnarrative sequence and do not connect to the zodiac or a hunting scene. Animal forms in Jewish art can symbolize strength, holiness, or wisdom. One finial depicts a fox, phoenix, hare, and owl alternating with lion faces. The second finial shows a phoenix, bear, rabbit, another unidentified bird (perhaps a dove), and eagle with alternating lion faces. The forms likely derived from folk art, prints, manuscripts, or synagogue interiors. Certain symbols, such as the double-headed eagle or griffin, were appropriated from other sources into Jewish imagery, yet one of the challenges with animal representations and iconography in Judaica is the lack of a clear development.[18] The finials show domestic and wild animals, and the ornithological forms include a variety of birds that have symbolic associations (fig. 10a–d), For example, chapter four of the *Perek Shira*, entitled *A Song of the Birds*, mentions a rooster, dove, vulture, crane, songbirds, swallow, stork, starling, raven, goose, and ducks. In Psalms 11:1 there is a known reference to birds, since they are understood to be a connection to the human soul: "How say ye to my soul: Flee thou, to your mountain, ye birds?"[19] The dove, an important bird in the story of Noah, refers to the Jewish people. As a bird of prey, the eagle (known in Hebrew as *nesher* and *ayit*) was seen as a symbolic power, and may have been added to Jewish iconography during the Roman Empire or from its later use in the heraldry of Europe.[20] The eagle is mentioned in Exodus 19:4: "I bore you on eagles' wings," and in Deuteronomy 32:11: "like an eagle who rouses his nestlings," which is inscribed on the painted ceilings of Chodorów (1712) and Zabłudów (1714) synagogues in Galicia.[21]

Animals are also carved into the decorative band on the base of the finials. The rabbit or hare can be seen as a symbol of the Jewish people who could be interpreted as the prey, always being hunted. For example, in synagogue interiors hares were often portrayed in the claws of an eagle encircled by the zodiac. Some of the earliest depictions of the hare are seen in Hebrew manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

fig. 9 Detail of Torah finial bases showing lion face in center (fig. 1)

fig. 10a, b, c, d Details of Torah finials showing bird species (fig. 1)

where they are being chased by dogs or other animals.[22] They are also found on Jewish tombstones, sometimes in sets of two or three in a circular composition.[23] Bears also appear in textual references and on painted interiors of synagogues, associated with eating honey, a possible explanation for its use on the finial. In *Perek Shira* the bear is given his own hymn. The Book of Ezekiel (3:3) reads, "eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it. So, I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth." The bear is also referenced in the First Book of Samuel (17:34–37) and in the Book of Kings (2:23–24). It is common to see bears in Galician synagogue interiors painted as a pair, climbing trees, or as a stand-alone image.

In Hebrew manuscript illuminations, foxes are depicted next to an open gate as a symbol of the destroyed Temple. They are also recorded in the section of the Babylonian Talmud describing three well-known rabbis on a journey to Jerusalem who spot a fox running from the location of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. This sighting was interpreted as a message that the Temple would be rebuilt and restored, an important legend to reinforce how faith can turn symbols of sadness into hope.[24] An additional reference is found in Jewish folkloric literature that was first translated from Hebrew to Yiddish in the sixteenth century. Titled *Mishlè Shu'alim* (*Fox Fables*), the tales were written between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[25]

In the Talmud and elsewhere, the phoenix, one of the most surprising subjects in Jewish art, is mentioned in connection with the Garden of Eden. The mythological association of the phoenix with immortality is rooted in the idea that it was the only animal, according to rabbinical myth, that obeyed the order to not eat from the forbidden tree. There are three references to the phoenix with three different names.[26] The word *Chol* is used in the Book of Job (29:18): "I thought I would end my days with my family and be as long-lived as the phoenix." The word *ziz* is mentioned twice in Psalms as a mountainous bird or a bird of heaven. And the word *urshina* is found in the Babylonian Talmud. Derived from the Greek word for a "timeless bird," an *urshina* is a historically mythological and powerful animal with symbolic significance beyond Jewish art.[27]

Lions appear frequently in Jewish ritual objects, textiles, tombstones, and synagogues as a symbol of majesty or as an icon of the tribe of Judah. Lions with a range of expressions and postures are carved in pairs to frame the Tablet of Moses painted on synagogue walls or constructed out of papercuts. Papercuts are a traditional Jewish craft in which intricate compositions produce elaborate ornamental scenes with animals and Hebrew words. This expressive form of decoration would be displayed in the synagogue or in homes and were generally exchanged as gifts. The lions' faces may derive from similar depictions of beasts in medieval manuscripts. The first mention comes from the Book of Genesis in relation to the tribe of Judah (49:9–10): "Judah is a lion's whelp, on prey, my son, have you grown. He crouches, lies down like a lion, like a lioness who dare rouse him." Together, the suite of symbols shows how deeply the animal kingdom was adapted as a source of ornamental design, to enhance the surfaces of the finials.

In the early fifteenth century, the Jewish population in Galicia expanded and the region became a center of commerce and Jewish craft. By the sixteenth century there were guilds for locksmiths, embroiderers, carpenters, and silversmiths.[28] Jewish members were required to attend a study day on Saturday and a rabbi was consulted with each new guild association.[29] Between 1619 and 1639 in cities such as Kraków, Lviv, Brody, and Przemyśl, Jewish guilds established rules regarding membership, regulation of work, fees, and apprenticeships.[30] After 1650 it was estimated that more than one-third of the Jewish population belonged to a workshop, and by 1772 Jewish guilds and workshops expanded to include tailors, furriers, and lace makers. However, anti-Semitic assaults created frequent problems for the Jews of Galicia, as they were seen as a threat to Christian guilds. By the early eighteenth century, the Jewish population in Galicia was estimated at 900,000, and in addition to guilds, the community fostered synagogue painters who created elaborate ornamental interiors. Galician synagogues also contained a considerable amount of silver and gold Judaica, but those items were usually imported from Germany and Austria.[31]

The 1782 Edict of Tolerance was established under Joseph II, Holy Roman emperor, who introduced emancipation and reform to all religious minorities under the Habsburg Empire. This shift in politics increased economic prosperity because it allowed religious minorities to become equal citizens (the empire lasted until 1918).[32] Under the edict, Jewish members of society could keep religious autonomy, attend university, work in the agricultural trade, purchase property, and join guilds. The Jewish communities of Galicia entered the textile and tailoring, carpentry, and milliners' guilds. Since The Met's Torah finials are dated 1775–90, they were created during a change in the status of Jews joining an official guild. It is possible that the finials were made by Jewish craftsmen working outside the local

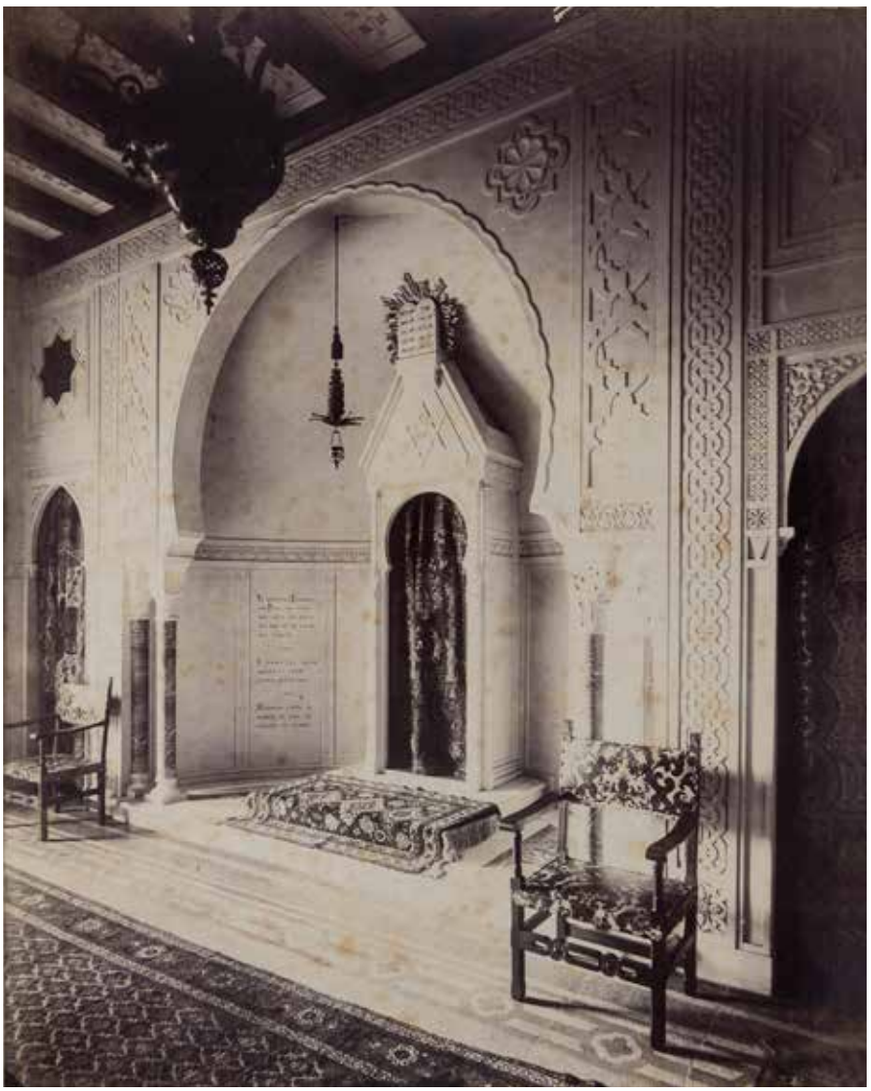

fig. 11 Interior view of private synagogue in the Hotel Salomon de Rothschild at 11, rue Berryer, Paris, 1880. The Rothschild Archive, London (000/2732/7)

Christian guilds and before the 1782 edict went into effect. Even when guilds were established within the Jewish community, they largely operated independently, outside of the official guild system from which they were historically excluded.[33] In this region, Christian makers stamped their silver or pewter, so a missing hallmark suggests a piece was made by someone outside the guild.

The Edict of Tolerance later enabled Galician Jews to migrate to Austria and establish communities in Vienna beginning in 1857. After 1933 the Nazi Party seized Jewish cultural property, including ritual objects. Conducting provenance research on Judaica made in Europe in and before 1939–45 is challenging. Ceremonial objects changed hands numerous times through force in German-occupied Europe. In many cases the reallocation of Judaica went undocumented, and a clear history of ownership eludes the researcher. Prior to World War II there were important centers, exhibitions, and collections across Europe in addition to synagogues numbering in the thousands, each with ornate Judaica for ceremonial use. One of the first private collections of Judaica was created by Alexander David of Braunschweig (1687–1765), a court Jew who served Duke Anton Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel from Halberstadt, Germany. The first public exhibition of Jewish ceremonial objects, antiquities, and manuscripts, known as the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, occurred in 1887 at the Royal Albert Hall in London.[34] Vienna established a Jewish museum in 1895, and was soon followed by Prague, Budapest, Warsaw, Vilna, and Hamburg.

Although further research is required to determine how the finials were acquired by the Rothschild family, two separate but noteworthy documents exist in the Rothschild Archive, London. The first is a letter addressed to Anselm Salomon von Rothschild, who led the Austrian banking branch in Vienna. On September 20, 1842, one of the Jewish communities of Lviv (formerly Lemberg) requested financial support.[35] It was signed by the community members from the Temple Synagogue in Lemberg (known as Tempel-Synagoge or Deutsch-Israelitisches Bethaus). Among the names listed at the bottom of the letter is the well-known Dr. Jacob Rappaport, one of the first medical doctors of Lvov, and a descendant of Ukrainian and Polish rabbis extending back to his great-grandfather. The letter identifies community members and a request for philanthropic support by the Rothschilds for Jewish communities in Galicia, but does not provide information regarding the finials. The second document, a photograph of a small synagogue housed in the private residence of Hôtel Salomon de Rothschild at 11, rue Berryer in Paris, provides evidence that some Rothschild family members may have had an interest in acquiring Judaica to furnish this private devotional space. However, there is no mention of the finials. In 1880, Adèle Hannah Charlotte von Rothschild had commissioned photographs of her recently constructed home. An interior view shows a horseshoe arch with a *ner tamid* (eternal light) hanging in front of a narrow Torah ark with the Ten Commandments inscribed on a tablet above (fig. 11). On the left are three French inscriptions from Psalms 26 and 147 and Deuteronomy 6:5. One of the best-documented Judaica collections in the Rothschild family is that of Charlotte de Rothschild (1825–1899), who in addition to her own holdings acquired the collection of Isaac Strauss, and donated most of the objects to the Musée de Cluny, Paris, in

1890. Strauss, a well-known classical musician and composer (not related to Viennese composer Johann Strauss), made acquisitions between 1830 and 1887 and displayed his collection publicly three times beginning in 1874 at the Palais du Corps Législatif in Paris, then in 1878 at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, and in 1887 at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition in London.[36] The finials were not mentioned in any catalogues from these exhibitions.

The extraordinary survival of precious items like the Torah finials helps to shed light on Jewish art of the diaspora. This acquisition by The Met expands the Museum's holdings of Judaica and places a remarkable expression of Galician craftsmanship in a public collection. While there are works of silver, textiles, and faience from Ukraine and Poland in the collection, this pair of finials attests to the former Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, a region imbued with a complex cultural history and rich aesthetic traditions.

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NOTES

1 Rothschild sale 2023, lot 26.
2 Vishnitzer 1921.
3 Scherman 1998, 819–21. Kings I, 7:18–22, 42: "He made the columns so that there were two rows [of pomegranates] encircling the top of the one network, to cover the capitals that were on the top of the pomegranates; and he did the same for the second capital. There were 200 pomegranates in rows around the top of the second capital."
4 Żygulski and Markowski 1987, 29–71.
5 Assaf 2002, 5; Biale et al. 2017, 18–77.
6 Dynner 2006, 25–41.
7 Muchawsky-Schnapper 2012, 34. An Eastern European illuminated manuscript prayer book from the second half of the fifteenth century now located in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, also belonged to the family. Fishof 1986–87.
8 Harel Hoshen 1996, 149–54.
9 Goldman-Ida 2017, 1–2.
10 Goshgarian 2018, 177.
11 Nadel-Golobič 1979, 345–55.
12 Korsch 2014.
13 Bycroft and Dupré 2019, 1–12.
14 Koeppe 2008, 5; Scherman 1998, 205, 1273, "It shall be square and doubled, a span in length and a span in width. Set in it mounted stones, in four rows of stones. The first row shall be a row of carnelian, chrysolite, and emerald; the second row: a turquoise, a sapphire, and an amethyst; the third row: a jacinth, an agate, and a crystal; and the fourth row: a beryl, a lapis lazuli, and a jasper. They shall be framed with gold in their mountings. The stones shall correspond [in number] to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, corresponding to their names." In Ezekiel 28:13, "You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your adornment: Carnelian, chrysolite, and amethyst; Beryl, lapis lazuli, and jasper; Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald; And gold beautifully wrought for you, mined for you, prepared the day you were created."
15 Bartal and Polonsky 2009, 126; Kiliańczyk-Zięba 2024, 70–77.
16 Yaniv 2017, 123–28; Zaidman-Mauer 2021, 50–52.
17 Shadur and Shadur 2002, 96–97.
18 Epstein 1997, 10–15.
19 Yaniv 2017, 97–98.
20 Ibid., 98.
21 Piechotka and Piechotka 2004, 137.
22 Epstein 1997, 22–26; Podwal 2021, 32; Orgad 2022, 294.
23 Khaimovich 2011, 158–66, Podwal 2021, 32.
24 R. Wischnitzer 1990, 73–75.
25 Epstein 1997, 9.
26 Niehoff 1996, 255–60.
27 Podwal 2021, 44.
28 M. Wischnitzer 1965, 212.
29 Kremer 1970, 65.
30 M. Wischnitzer 1965, 216.
31 Ibid., 29; Arnold 2021, 19–35.
32 Rabinbach 1975, 44; Sorkin 2019, 65–68.
33 Benjamin 1987, 216–19.
34 Royal Albert Hall 1887.
35 Rothschild Philanthropy and benefactions: Letter from the Jewish community of the City of Lvov and the Union of Viennese Merchantry with requests for financial aid to these organizations, February 18, 1842–September 20, 1848, File 637/1/203, Rothschild Archive, London.
36 Jarrassé 2018, 26–98.

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Lace in William Henry Fox Talbot and Antonio Bertoloni's *Album di Disegni Fotogenici*

FRANCESCA STROBINO

Between January and August 1839, William Henry Fox Talbot circulated numerous lace pictures as samples of his newest invention, the photogenic drawing, the first paper-based photographic process. Approximately 330 of Talbot's surviving photographs featuring fabrics are known, including depictions of lace, ribbons, cloth, and gauze.[1] Five of these prints were addressed to the renowned Italian botanist Antonio Bertoloni, who kept them in the *Album di Disegni Fotogenici*, now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 1).[2] Throughout 1839 and 1840, Bertoloni received and collected a total of thirty-six photogenic drawing specimens, along with Talbot's accompanying letters, newspaper clippings related to his process (published in Italy), and two photographic attempts by Sebastiano Tassinari. Bertoloni arranged

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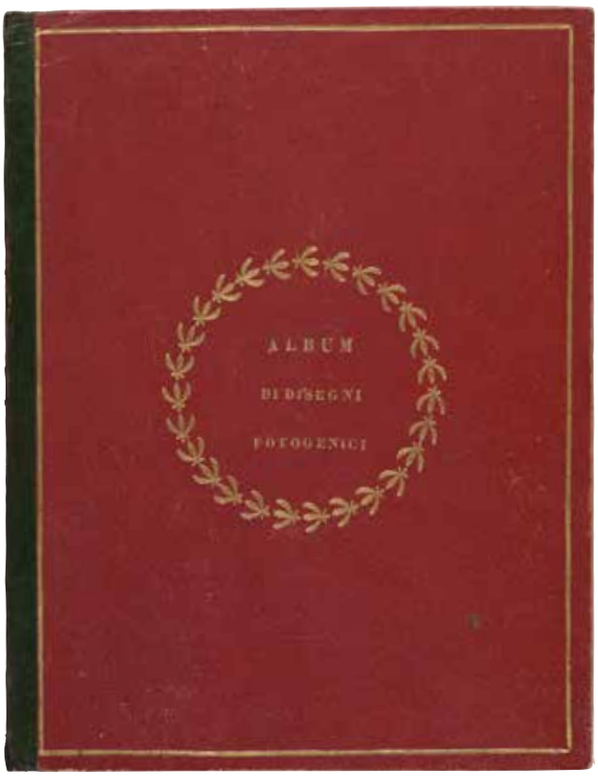


fig. 1 Cover of *Album di Disegni Fotogenici*, 1839–40. Photographs by William Henry Fox Talbot (British, 1800–1877) and Sebastiano Tassinari (Italian, 1814–1888) sent to and compiled by Antonio Bertoloni (Italian, 1775–1869). Album, 11¼ × 8 11/16 in. (28.5 × 22 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1936 (36.37)

one item per page, noting the subject of each picture at the bottom and specifying, at the start of each series, the group in which it had arrived (five installments). Despite its personal nature, the album provides a chronological and comprehensive record of the correspondence between Bertoloni and Talbot on the application of photography to science, and is an essential source for examining how Italian scientists reacted to the invention of paper photography in its early days.[3] As this article discusses, the album also serves as a critical—yet previously overlooked—source for examining a distinctive strategy Talbot employed in 1839 to promote paper photography among scientific audiences: using lace pictures as a proxy for scientific subjects to illustrate the precision of the newly invented photographic medium in recording scientific observations.

In addition to his recognition as the British photographic pioneer who invented four photographic processes—photogenic drawing (1839), calotype (1841), photographic engraving (1852), and photoglyphic engraving (1858)—Talbot was also a prolific scholar and practitioner active in several scientific fields.[4] Scholarly contributions based on his notebooks and archives have emphasized the breadth of his work, demonstrating how different areas of study (such as ancient languages, botany, mathematics, and optics) shaped the development of his photographic practice in various capacities.[5] However, none of Talbot's intellectual pursuits seems to explain his fascination with lace—an applied art particularly popular in the nineteenth century and associated with women's craftmanship.[6] In contrast to botanical samples, manuscripts, or reproductions of artworks—all subjects often featured in Talbot's early photographic experiments—at first glance, lace pictures appear out of place within his body of work and scientific interests.[7] For this reason, this category of images has long been neglected by scholars and has remained somewhat disconnected from Talbot's broader research aimed at achieving detailed visual records.[8] This article repositions the lace pictures in Bertoloni's album within the context of Talbot's scientific and photographic practice, restoring their meaning as well as highlighting how they operated within his network.

To understand why lace and gauze became relevant subjects for two men of science such as Talbot and Bertoloni, it is crucial to analyze Talbot's communication strategy at a time when paper photography still faced significant technical limitations in capturing small and intricate subjects as well as correctly fixing the photochemical image. More specifically, it will become evident that Talbot leveraged the unique visual qualities of fabrics—particularly a distinctive visual parity between lace and its photographic reproduction (especially in the negative)—for visualizing the indexical relationship between the photographic print and its subject, which appeared, at least superficially, unmediated by the maker. Lace pictures became particularly critical in the months following the public announcement of photogenic drawing in January 1839, when Talbot sought to establish the superiority of his invention over the daguerreotype—the silver-based photographic process introduced by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre in France the same year.[9] With a focus on this pivotal year in photographic history and on the overlooked subject of lace, this article offers a new reading of the well-known *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* as well as Talbot's strategy for mitigating the shortcomings of his first photographic process.

LACE PICTURES AND SCIENTIFIC NETWORKS

In 1839, in response to the French announcement of the daguerreotype process, Talbot experimented with various techniques and subjects to test his photogenic drawing process and demonstrate its broad applicability. He primarily used two methods for recording images: photographs taken with a camera and cameraless contact printing.[10] Talbot employed the latter technique to reproduce flat objects such as lace, as well as

botanical specimens and engravings. To create a contact print, a lace sample was placed on paper sensitized with sodium chloride and silver nitrate, then secured under the glass of a wooden printing frame and exposed to sunlight for a period determined by the weather conditions (ranging from ten to thirty minutes). Once the lace was removed, the paper retained a precise impression of its outline. The impression created in this manner was a negative, a photographic object characterized by reversed tones: light areas became dark, and vice versa. While this tonal shift could distort certain subjects (figurative or pictorial images), lace pictures retained their clarity despite the inversion, appearing as a white silhouette against a dark background. We can therefore observe a visual parity between the subject and the photograph—an exceptional rarity in this photographic technique. This did not happen with other subjects showing naturally occurring patterns, such as botanical specimens, where leaves appeared unnaturally "white," and their veins were less visible due to the opacity of certain leaves that blocked sunlight. On the other hand, the human-made intricate embroidery patterns of lace were captured in crisp detail, with even the finest threads recorded by the photographic process. Talbot took advantage of this material quality of lace and started to use it to address some of the early challenges in promoting paper photography as a recording tool in the sciences.

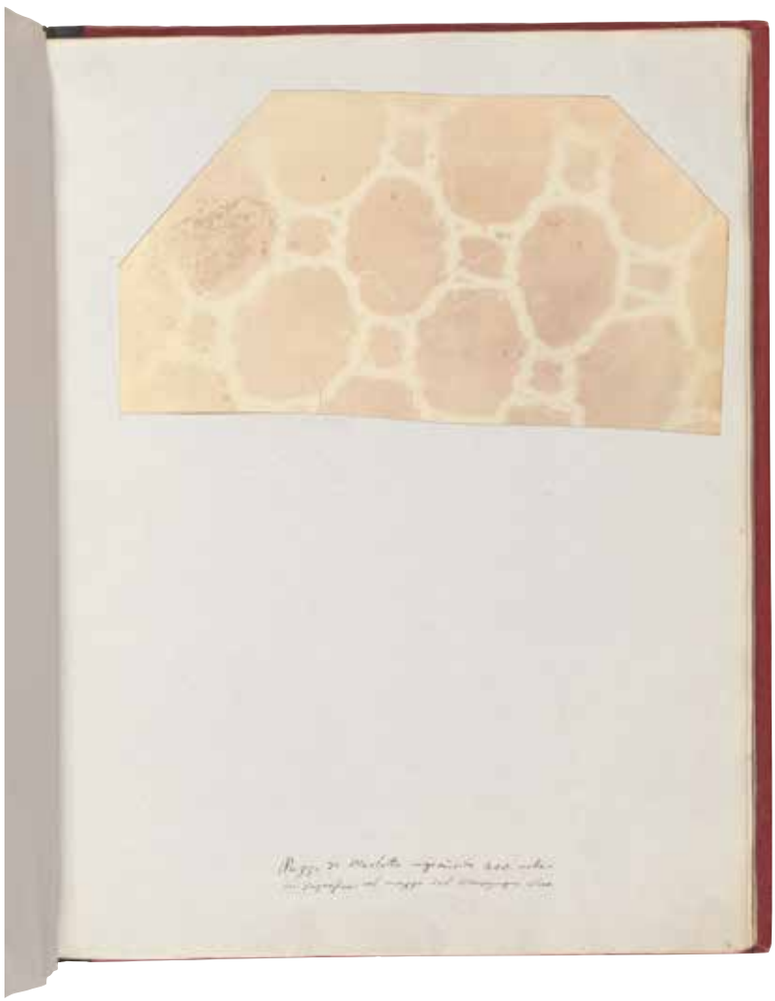


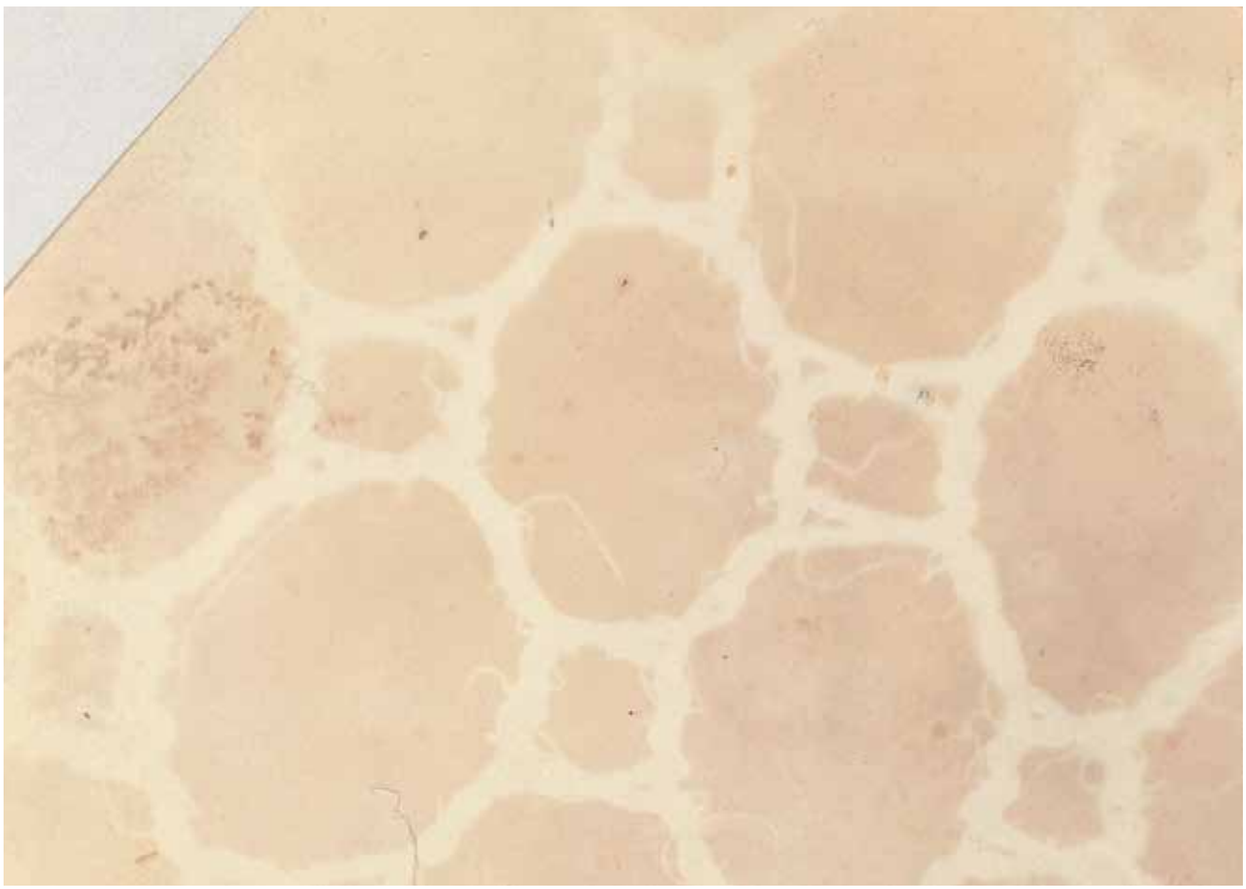
fig. 2a William Henry Fox Talbot. Page of *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* (fig. 1). Signed and inscribed by Talbot in ink on print, verso: *Lace in the Solar Microscope // 400 times magnified in surface // H. F. Talbot 1839*; inscribed by Bertoloni in ink on album page, recto: *Pezzo di Merletto ingrandito 400. volte // in superfice col mezzo del Microscopio solare*; 3 15/16 × 7 3/16 in. (10 × 18.3 cm)

Talbot's correspondence explains that his mother, Lady Elisabeth Feilding, daughter of the 2nd Earl of Ilchester, provided him with some of the lace samples he used in his photographic experiments, specifically what she identified as "real point" lace.[11] Although there is no direct evidence, it is reasonable to speculate that the samples were handmade, either by Feilding herself or per her commission. It was Feilding's intuition to use lace as the primary subject to demonstrate the verisimilitude and accuracy of photography to a broad audience, including not only scientists but also royalty, such as Queen Victoria, who was reportedly more impressed by Talbot's lace pictures than by his botanical ones.[12] Feilding's involvement in this subject choice is significant as it highlights two main points: how lace, a valuable fabric, was connected with social class, and how the women in Talbot's family led him to use lace. From one of Feilding's letters, it is clear that Talbot was not a lace connoisseur and could not identify the different lace points. This led Feilding to suggest that Talbot show her lace samples to his wife, Constance, so she could correctly identify which one was "real point."[13] It is evident that Talbot was not interested in lace per se, about which he knew little, but rather in the visual and material qualities of its pattern.

Talbot employed a range of strategies to circulate his lace pictures among diverse audiences, including published accounts describing his photographs, scientific demonstrations, and the exchange of photographic specimens through correspondence. He presented one of his "patterns of lace," created around 1834–35, at the Friday evening lecture on January 25, 1839, at the Royal Institution, London, where Daguerre's photographic process was also addressed, and later on January 31 to the Royal Society.[14] Lace played a crucial role in these public demonstrations, and he used the spontaneous reaction he received upon presenting his pictures to make an impactful statement:

> To give an idea of the degree of accuracy with which some objects can be imitated by this process, I need only mention one instance. Upon one occasion, having made an image of a piece of lace of an elaborate pattern, I showed it to some persons, at the distance of a few feet,

fig. 2b Enlargement of page shown in fig. 2a



> with the inquiry, whether it was a good representation? when the reply was, "That they were not to be so easily deceived, for that it was evidently no picture, but the piece of lace itself."[15]

In the following months, Talbot sent lace photogenic drawings, particularly "a gauze ribband," to fellow scientists such as physicists James David Forbes and David Brewster, who, in turn, shared these photographs with other colleagues.[16] Upon carefully examining the lace specimens, both Brewster and Forbes expressed their admiration. Brewster remarked, "They are very interesting, especially the Lace one," while Forbes wrote that he "was extremely pleased with the Lace specimen of Photogeny."[17] Lace was not typically a subject of interest for the Royal Institution, the Royal Society, Brewster, or Forbes, yet it captured their attention as it proved to be compelling for showcasing the accuracy of photography, thereby supporting Talbot's hope that his process could one day be applied to the observational sciences.

In addition to contact printing, in early 1839, Talbot began using fabric samples in his photographic experiments with the solar microscope (later known as photomicrography). Building on his extensive study of crystals and botanical specimens, he was well acquainted with this type of optical instrument, which used sunlight to produce an enlarged image of an object on a flat surface.[18] By projecting the enlarged image on a sodium chloride– and silver nitrate–sensitized sheet of paper for five to ten minutes, Talbot made photographs of lace magnified 400 times that he shared with the botanist Bertoloni (fig. 2a, b). By creating images of enlarged subjects previously visible only with the aid of the solar microscope, Talbot understood the power of photography to visualize and share faithful reproductions of details that were not easily grasped by the naked eye, as well as its critical role in the creation and dissemination of knowledge in the natural sciences.[19]

Other lace pictures created by Talbot with the solar microscope are known, but the one shown in figure 2a, b appears to be among the best preserved, likely because the album pages were wide enough to shield the photographs from direct sunlight.[20] It is important to note that in early 1839, Talbot's photographs were stabilized using only table salt. Although chemical fixation with sodium thiosulfate was discovered by Sir John Frederick

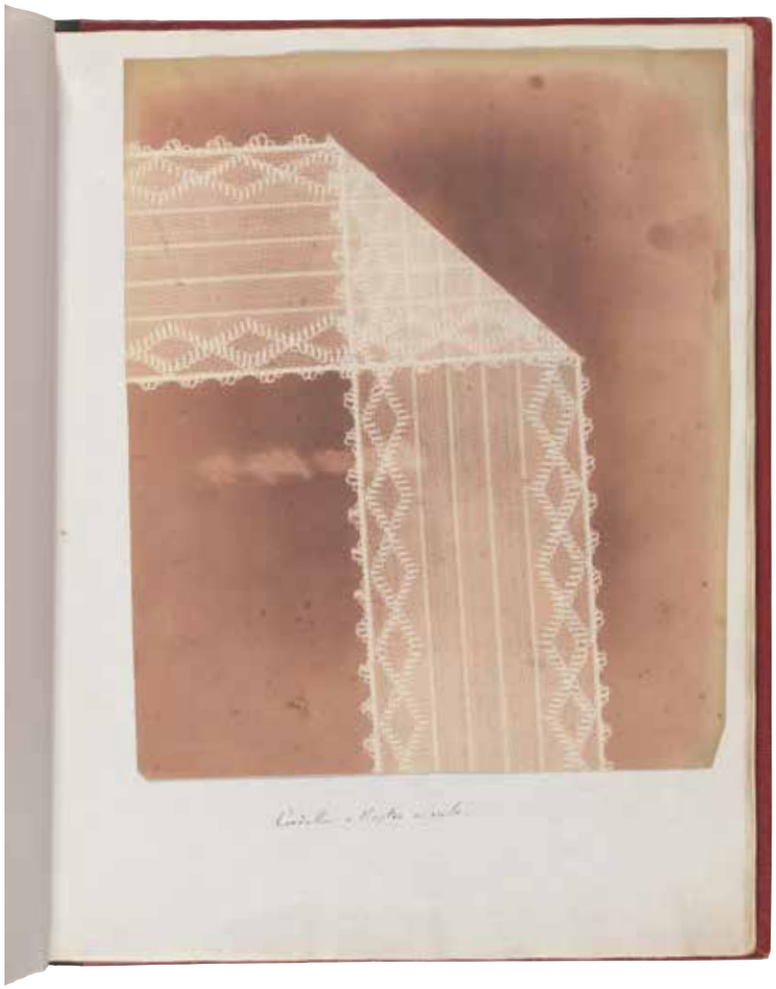


fig. 3a William Henry Fox Talbot. Photogenic drawing in *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* (fig. 1). Signed by Talbot in ink on print verso *C: H. F. Talbot photogr. 1839*; inscribed by Bertoloni in ink on album page, recto BC: *Cordella o Nastro a velo* 8½ × 7 1⁄16 in. (21.6 × 18 cm)

William Herschel in February 1839, Talbot did not adopt this method until later in the 1840s. For this reason, the photographs in Bertoloni's album are chemically unstable, and although the album protected them for many years, the majority of the photographs have faded, with some images now difficult to discern. In addition to chemical instability, photographs made with the solar microscope required greater technical precision than contact printing, which influenced the choice of subjects. Only a dozen of the solar microscope pictures made between 1839 and 1840 are dated (thanks to Talbot's autograph inscriptions); this small group of photographs shows how, in addition to lace, he also experimented with botanical specimens (particularly a cross section of horse chestnut) and the wings of a fly.[21] However, it is evident that these materials posed greater challenges compared to lace patterns, and many of the prints are now severely faded, showing significant loss of detail. Other photographs made with the solar microscope that exhibit greater sharpness are known, such as the wings of a lantern fly.[22] However, it is impossible to date this image with certainty, and it may have been created later, after Talbot invented the calotype process.[23] The difficulties in early solar microscope photographs likely stemmed from technical factors in both Talbot's photographic process (its photosensitivity and fixation) and microscope setup, which made it hard to create neat images of botanical and entomological specimens. Lace patterns were probably chosen in response to these technical limitations, serving as a necessary proxy for scientific subjects. Lace was readily available in Talbot's domestic sphere, and its enlarged human-made pattern was easily recognizable and discernible, thus appealing to both general audiences and scientists.

Talbot also provided a few magnified lace prints to his friend John Herschel, astronomer and natural philosopher, accompanied by a brief letter:

> I believe you have not seen any of my photographic attempts with the Solar Microscope. I therefore enclose 4 specimens of magnified lace. I have great hopes of this branch of the Art proving very useful, as for instance in copying the forms of minute crystallization which are so complicated as almost to defy the pencil.[24]

Two pictures representing magnified lace in the Talbot Catalogue Raisonné were originally from Herschel's collection and might be among the specimens mentioned in this letter.[25] Both appear faded and one image not visible at all, showing only chemical stains that highlight the chemical instability of these early photographs. As Talbot hinted at in this letter, pictures made with the solar microscope had the potential to be useful not to depict lace, but to copy "minute crystallization."[26] The study of crystals' structures (now known as crystallography) was one of Talbot's many scientific interests, which led to a Royal Society Bakerian Lecture in 1837.[27] When Talbot suggested applying solar microscope photography to the study of crystals, he was unable to do so. In fact, prior to the 1840s, he used photographs reproducing drawings of polarized crystals made by Charles M. Curtis, once again highlighting the likely technical limitations of his photographic process when applied to the solar microscope. Rather than creating a less impactful image of the crystals, Talbot used magnified lace to demonstrate how scientific observation could be recorded in all its intricate detail, as seen in the lace pattern.[28]

In the letter to Herschel, Talbot also emphasized how his work with the solar microscope could compete with traditional manual techniques (drawings and engravings) and the daguerreotype, particularly in their use for scientific purposes:

fig. 3b Enlargement of photogenic drawing shown in fig. 3a

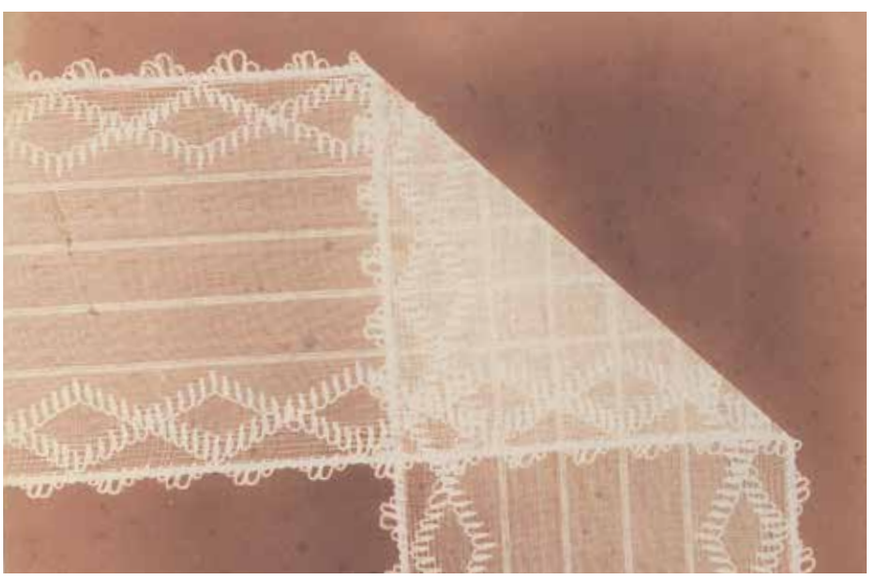
> I expect to be able to compete with M. Daguerre in drawing with the Solar Microscope, when a few obvious improvements have been adopted. By the way did he show you anything remarkable of this kind?[29]

In his response, Herschel acknowledged receiving the "very pretty specimens of Magnified Lace," noting that they were "highly interesting in point of their object & principle & very fine in point of execution."[30] He also assured that "Daguerre neither shewed me or alluded to any thing of the kind as having been done by him, though of course the 'Daguerreotype' is applicable to that purpose."[31] In fact, as Herschel reported in another letter, the daguerreotypes made by Daguerre that he inspected in May 1839 surprised him for the exceptional "richness & delicacy of execution" and were mostly views of Paris (he mentioned in particular river scenes in rain), and copies of sculptures, with no reference to applications of the daguerreotype to scientific subjects.[32]

To reinforce his position and primacy in mastering the application of photography to the solar microscope, Talbot also wrote a letter to the mathematician and astronomer John William Lubbock:

> I will look out and send you some pictures with the Solar Microscope (magnified lace; 100 & 400 times magnified in surface) which I made about 3 months ago. Herschel says he saw nothing like them in Paris, & Robert Brown says the same.[33]

The exchange of magnified lace among scientists underscores the critical role of sharing photographic innovations and technological breakthroughs. Lace pictures served as more than visual curiosities: they functioned as strategic networking tools, leveraging their intricate patterns as persuasive elements in scientific discourse. Bertoloni's *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* offers a unique and invaluable resource to further analyze their meaning in international scientific contexts.



BERTOLONI'S *ALBUM DI DISEGNI FOTOGENICI*

Talbot knew Bertoloni since 1826, when he met him in Bologna and examined his herbarium, which he described as "the best in Italy."[34] At the time, Bertoloni, a generation older than Talbot, was an established scientist and professor of botany at University of Bologna, with an extensive scientific network including Talbot's correspondents Giovanni Battista Amici, Michele Tenore, and William Hooker.[35] After Talbot's visit they shared numerous botanical samples and the outcome of their work, including Bertoloni's *Flora Italica*, published in ten volumes between 1833 and 1854.[36] Much of their correspondence, especially that involving photographs and other materials, was mediated by Talbot's uncle, diplomat William Thomas Horner Fox-Strangways, who also had a great interest in botany and was in contact with Bertoloni.[37] Talbot's and Bertoloni's photographic correspondence was modeled on botanical exchange that, as Jennifer Tucker notes, created communities and viewing audiences focused on investigating nature and its forms.[38]

Talbot sent the first package containing photogenic drawings of six botanical samples, a lace ribbon, and an engraving in June 1839, pointing out how his invention would be a great aid to botanists, "especially the drawings that I am doing with the *solar microscope*."[39] The work in figure 3a, signed on the verso "H. F. Talbot photogr. 1839," reproduces what Bertoloni identified as "cordella," a type of net lace with raised outlines. This is the first picture of a textile received from Talbot, who carefully arranged the object before contact printing it. The ribbon folds over itself in the central area, creating a dense net of threads that, despite their complexity, were reproduced in exquisite detail. Although the image is partially faded due to the chemical instability of salt, each thread of the ribbon remains visible, and we can imagine that the contrast between the ribbon's white silhouette and the dark background was even stronger when Bertoloni first received the print (fig. 3b). The arrangement of the ribbon echoed a long tradition of illustrating natural history subjects, where the object was displayed in a manner that best

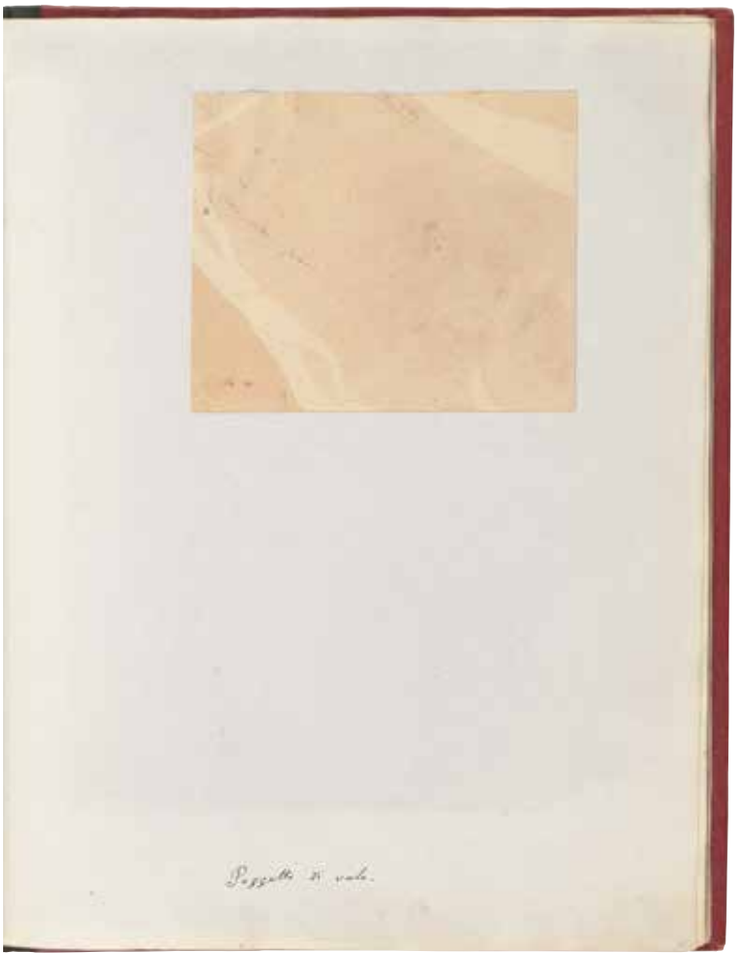


fig. 4 William Henry Fox Talbot. Photogenic drawing in *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* (fig. 1). Signed and inscribed by Talbot in ink on print, verso TL: *Crape*, verso BR: *H. F. T.*; inscribed by Bertoloni in ink on album page, recto BC: *Pezzetto di velo*; 8 11/16 × 6⅞ in. (22 × 17.5 cm)

fig. 5 William Henry Fox Talbot. Photogenic drawing in *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* (fig. 1). Signed by Talbot in ink on print, verso BC: *H. F. Talbot 1839*; inscribed by Bertoloni in ink on album page, recto BC: *Pezzo di merletto*; 7½ × 5 5/16 in. (19 × 13.5 cm)

showcased its form, allowing the viewer to inspect it in minute detail.[40]

In August, Talbot followed up by sending a few "little things":

> a sample of my drawings done with the Solar Microscope. It's a little piece of lace enlarged to 400 times its actual size. This will be useful especially to the Naturalists, since one can copy the most difficult things with much ease, for example crystallizations, tiny parts of plants, &c. &c. Then there is a Gramina and a piece of lace, and another piece of crêpe, in their actual sizes, to show how clearly the image is drawn.[41]

In this second shipment, three of the five photogenic drawing prints—two gauzes, a lace pattern, a botanical specimen, and a view of Lacock Abbey—depicted textiles. These included the solar microscope picture of lace in figure 2a, b, a piece of crepe (fig. 4), and a net lace (fig. 5). Although botany was the scientific interest that Talbot and Bertoloni shared, Talbot did not use botanical samples as test objects to show the application of photography to the solar microscope. As in the aforementioned exchange with Herschel, Talbot used lace as a proxy, as it proved to be the best subject for demonstrating this use of paper photography, effectively mitigating its technical shortcomings.[42] Importantly, Talbot's lace and botanical images employed a shared visual language that is linked to how he carefully posed his subjects. As for the ribbon in figure 3a, b, the objects reproduced in figures 2a, b, 4, and 5 are displayed in a way that emphasizes their forms and details, for instance the creases and folds that Talbot intentionally made with the aim of showing "how clearly the image is drawn" even in its most intricate areas. If we compare these images with Figure 6a, which reproduces a *Gramina* (grass plant)—part of the same shipment—we can see, despite the fading of the image, how the botanical specimen loses details in the areas where the grass overlaps (fig. 6b). This result was due to some parts of the plant that were denser, a characteristic that did not suit the contact printing process, which required a certain degree of transparency. Another example is seen in Figure 7, which reproduces

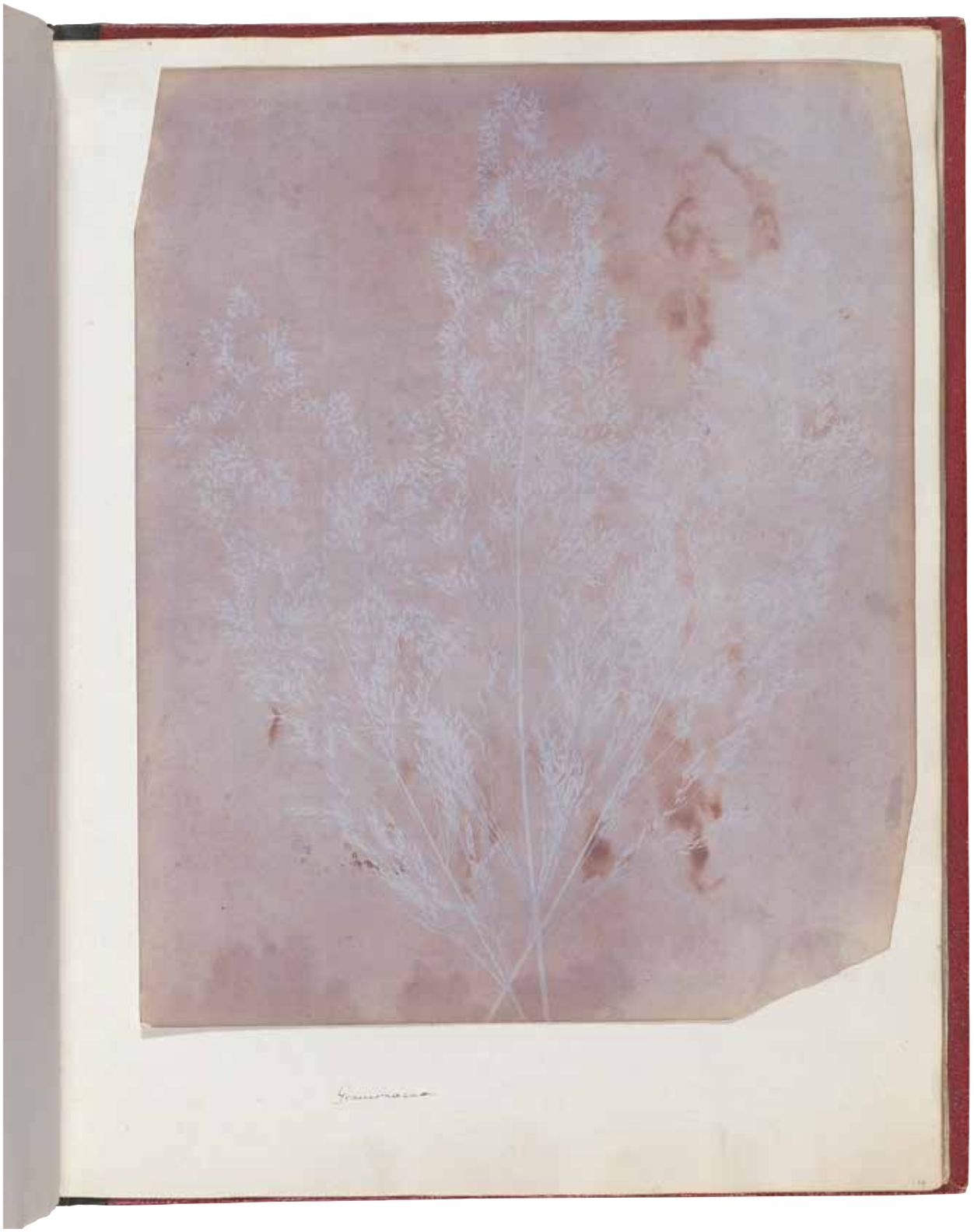


fig. 6a William Henry Fox Talbot. Photogenic drawing in *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* (fig. 1). Signed by Talbot in ink on print, verso TC: *H. F. Talbot phot: 1839*; inscribed by Bertoloni in ink on album page, recto BC: *Graminacea*; watermark: *J. WHATMAN // TURKEY MILL // 1838*; 9 1/16 × 7 3/8 in. (23 × 18.7 cm)

fig. 6b Enlargement of photogenic drawing shown in fig. 6a

fig and hawthorn leaves, where the natural pattern of the leaves' veins is not clearly visible due to their opacity. In contrast, lace lacked large opaque areas, consisting instead of a precise crossing of threads that made the pattern distinct and legible. As Talbot pointed out in his letter, lace pictures, owing to their unique visual and material qualities, provided tangible proof that photography could reproduce tiny details and elaborate subjects with high precision. This capacity appears especially true in the image created with the solar microscope, where we can see the lace net and even the loose threads, invisible to the naked eye (fig. 2b). It is in these small details and apparent defects manifesting the materiality of the subject that lace reveals its potential as Talbot's strategic asset in presenting photography as an objective and trustworthy medium.[43]

As many other studies have pointed out, the notion of photographic "objectivity" was not yet established in 1839.[44] However, we can see in Talbot's letters and photographs a clear effort in conveying an idea of photographic verisimilitude connected to how photographs were made. The subject of these pictures carried an important role meant to prove Talbot's visual argument. While all the photographs Talbot sent to Bertoloni aimed to suggest the application of photography to science, lace pictures make evident how this claim was not necessarily based on the subjects reproduced but on the mechanics of the photographic process itself. It is instructive to consider the strong indexical relationship between lace and its photographic reproduction with the contact printing process. Due to the physical presence of lace on the photosensitive paper, the direct agency of the subject "reproducing itself" appears to come across stronger than in images made with the camera. If we take into account the five lace prints that Bertoloni collected in his album, including figure 8 sent in Talbot's final shipment, we see how each of them reproduced a different textile, from fine crepe (fig. 4) to lace net (fig. 5) and more complex embroideries like the ones in Figure 8, now almost entirely faded. The variety of textiles demonstrates Talbot's extensive experimentation with this category of material with the aim of testing the technical limits of the photographic drawing process. However, the use of different types of lace and gauze also echoes the language of botany, where specimens are classified into groups and species based on their forms. In this context, the diverse lace samples were used to simulate natural specimens and showcase photography's ability to accurately capture fine details essential for natural history classification.

As with contact printing of lace, botanical specimens were not mediated by the subjectivity of the artist's hand but were recorded mechanically by photographic chemistry. However, even though botanical and lace specimens were created using the same process and shared a common visual language in how they were "posed," from a strictly visual perspective, botanical contact prints revealed the photographic mediation more clearly (due to reversed tones), and their natural inner patterns (such as veins) were captured with less precision than lace patterns. It was, therefore, the technical limitations of the photogenic process that made lace pictures a necessary proxy. Nevertheless, despite the contact printing process and the indexical bond between the subject and its reproduction, the apparent verisimilitude of lace was not effortless. As the folds in the fabric reveal, the perceived "objectivity" of these images was carefully constructed by their maker, who intentionally arranged them.

In the album, Bertoloni also included two articles written by his nephew Luigi Vaccà, a professor of medicine, published in the journal *Ricoglitore di Cognizioni Utili*.[45] The articles focused on Talbot's photogenic drawing process, deriving from Talbot's paper "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing" and the specimens Bertoloni had received and shared with Vaccà—likely the only ones available in Italy at the time.[46] They provided an overview of the various

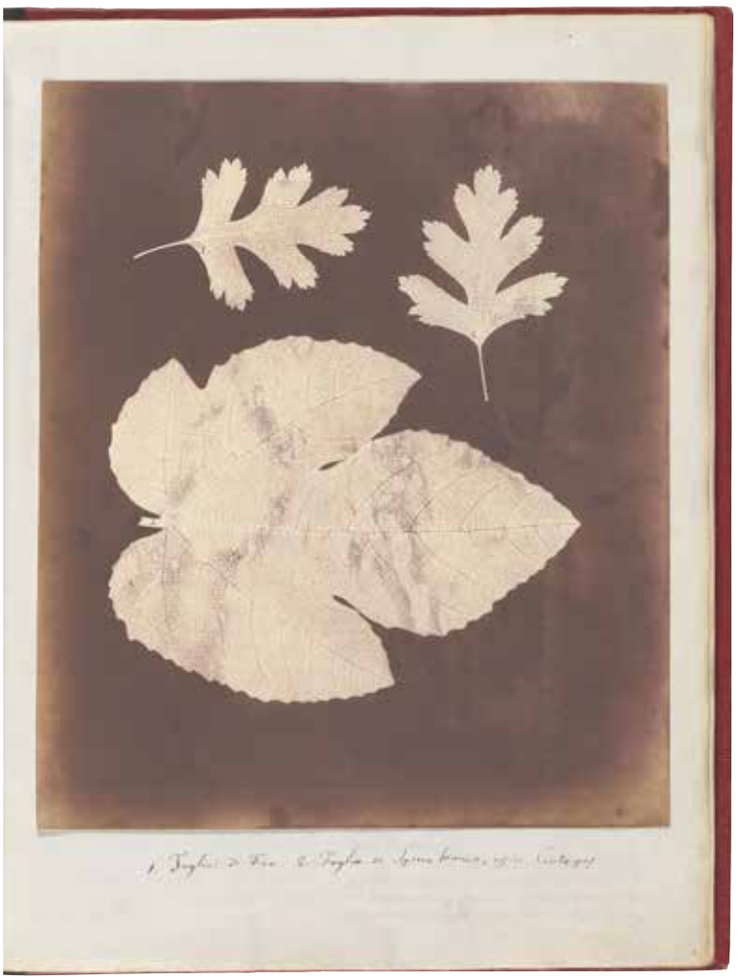


fig. 7 William Henry Fox Talbot. Photogenic drawing in *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* (fig. 1). Image elements numbered by Bertoloni in ink on print, recto; signed by Talbot in ink on print, verso (sideways) *C: H. F. Talbot 1839*; inscribed by Bertoloni on album page, recto BC: *1. Foglia di Fico. 2. Foglia di Spino Bianco*; 8¼ × 6⅞ in. (21 × 17.5 cm)

fig. 8 William Henry Fox Talbot. Photogenic drawing in *Album di Disegni Fotogenici* (fig. 1). Signed by Talbot in ink on print, verso BR: *H. F. Talbot*; inscribed by Bertoloni in ink on album page, recto BC: *Merletto o Pizzo*; 8¼ × 6¾ in. (21 × 17.1 cm)

subjects Talbot photographed, as well as the different techniques he employed: camera obscura, contact printing, and magnifications made with the solar microscope. Among the thirty-six photogenic drawings that Talbot sent to Bertoloni—including views of his ancestral home, a breakfast table setting, and a sculpture of Patroclus—the only subjects used to illustrate the scientific applications of photography were fifteen botanical specimens and five lace pictures.

Vaccà, like many other scientists before him, was particularly captivated by the lace samples, praising how "the ribbon not only shows the embroidery with great precision, but even the finest thread of the mesh."[47] As Vaccà's articles and Bertoloni's album attest, Talbot's strategy proved successful, with lace pictures becoming a convincing asset for promoting the application of photography within international scientific circles, both in the press and through private networks. Similar to botanical specimens, five lace images were carefully collected and preserved in the album of a renowned scientist, who kept them as documentation of the diverse applications of photography. Although the lace patterns themselves held little relevance for a botanist like Bertoloni and his fellow scientists, these images became important as they demonstrated the intangible qualities of photogenic drawing: verisimilitude and accuracy.

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NOTES

1 Strobino 2024a, 78. See images in the Talbot Catalogue Raisonné.
2 Talbot continued to send parcels to Bertoloni after August 1839. In total, Bertoloni received five parcels, three from Talbot and two from Talbot's uncle William Thomas Horner Fox-Strangways. The album also contains three photographs by the Italian pharmacist and chemist Sebastiano Tassinari. Antonio Bertoloni's album is fully digitized: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/268303.
3 For an analysis of Bertolini's album in the context of Italian photography and national identity, see Saunders 2015.
4 Among the many studies and biographies of Talbot, see Arnold 1977, Weaver 1992, Batchen 2008, and Leers and Schaaf 2017. Regarding Talbot's photomechanical work, see Schaaf 2003 and Strobino 2024a.
5 Schaaf 2000; Brusius 2009; Brusius 2010; Brusius, Dean, and Ramalingam 2013; Roberts 2016.
6 On lace and female work, see Wardle 1982, Freedgood 2003, and Cormack and Majer 2022.
7 On the use of botanical specimens, see Nickel 1998.
8 An example is Smith 1993, where the author focuses uniquely on botany. This gap is addressed in Strobino 2024a, chap. 2.
9 On the invention of photography and debate in 1839, see Siegel 2017.
10 Barnes 2018, 7–9.
11 Strobino 2024a, 81.
12 Letter from Theresa Anna Maria Digby (née Fox-Strangways) to Talbot, April 13, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3862.
13 Letter from Elisabeth Theresa Feilding (née Fox-Strangways) to Talbot, June 29, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3992.
14 Talbot 1839a.
15 Talbot 1839b, 199–200.
16 Letters from David Brewster to Talbot, February 12, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3804; and March 14, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3836. See also letter from Talbot to James David Forbes, February 27, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3820.
17 Letter from Brewster to Talbot, February 12, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3804; letter from Forbes to Talbot, April 2, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3854.
18 On Talbot's experiments with the solar microscope, see Wilder 2018.
19 See also the essays in Keller 2008.
20 The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné includes many of the surviving photographs created by Talbot, including several taken with the solar microscope.
21 See Schaaf nos. 2432 and 2337 in the Talbot Catalogue Raisonné.
22 Schaaf nos. 4301 and 1484 in the Talbot Catalogue Raisonné.
23 Talbot discusses how the calotype process improved his solar microscope photographs in a letter to Samuel Highley, May 10, 1853, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 6774.
24 Letter from Talbot to John Frederick William Herschel, September 8, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3927.
25 Schaaf nos. 2274 and 2250 in the Talbot Catalogue Raisonné.
26 Letter from Talbot to Herschel, September 8, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3927.
27 Talbot 1836; Talbot 1837; Wilder 2018.
28 For further discussion on the parallels between lace and crystals in Talbot's photographic work, see Strobino 2024a, 98–104.
29 Letter from Talbot to Herschel, September 8, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3927.
30 Letter from Herschel to Talbot, September 10, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3931.
31 Ibid.
32 Letter from Herschel to Talbot, May 9, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3875.
33 Letter from Talbot to Lubbock, October 9, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3954.
34 Letter from Talbot to James Edward Smith, August 27, 1826, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 1470.
35 Giacomini 1967.
36 Letters from Bertolini to Talbot, docs. no. 1601, 1652, 2762, 3225, 3523, and Talbot to Bertolini, doc. no. 2759, Talbot Correspondence Project.
37 Strobino 2024b. See also note 2 above.
38 Tucker 2005, 21.
39 Letter from Talbot to Bertoloni, June 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3887: "surtout les dessins que je fais avec *le microscope solaire*."
40 Tucker 2005, 20–21.
41 Letter from Talbot to Bertoloni, August 21, 1839, Talbot Correspondence Project, doc. no. 3921: "un échantillon de mes dessins faits avec le Microscope Solaire. C'est un morceau de dentelle agrandi 400 fois en surface. Ceci sera surtout utile aux Naturalistes puisqu'on peut copier les choses les plus difficiles par exemple les crystallisations les parties minitieuses des plantes, &c. &c. avec beaucoup de facilité. Puis il y a une Graminée et un morceau de dentelle, et un autre de crêpe, grandeur naturelle, pour en montrer combien l'image est nettement dessiné [*sic*]."
42 Strobino 2024a, 93.
43 On photography and objectivity, see Daston and Galison 1992, Daston and Galison 2008, and Tucker 2008.
44 Daston and Galison 1992; Tucker 2005; Daston and Galison 2008; Tucker 2008.
45 Vaccà 1839a; Vaccà 1839b.
46 See Bonetti 2010.
47 "Il nastro non solo fa vedere con tutta precisione il ricamo, ma ogni più fino tessuto della trama," Vaccà 1839a. The object described in the Vaccà article (fig. 3a, b in this article) is *Cordella o nastro a velo,* MMA 36.37 (8).

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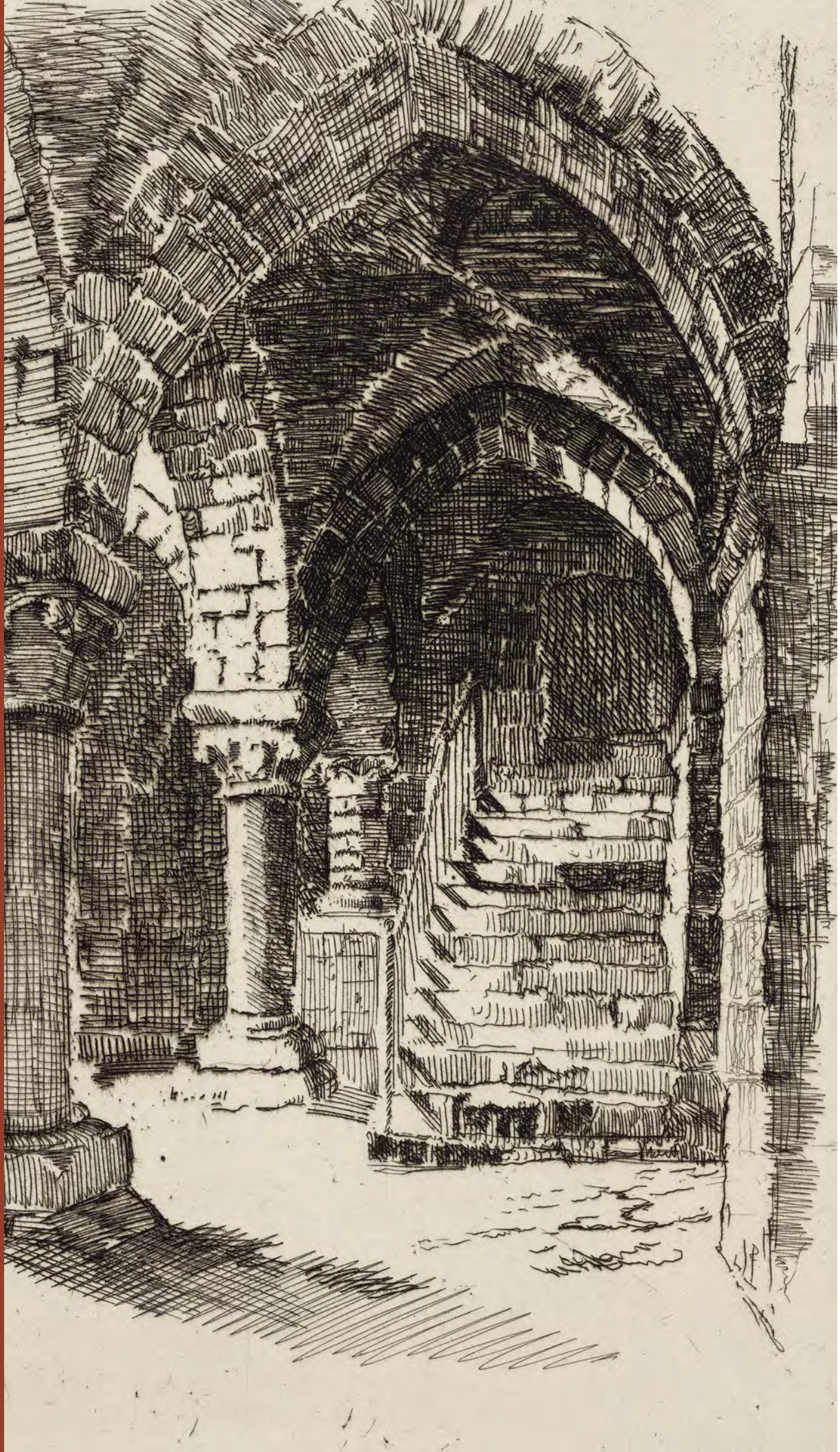

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